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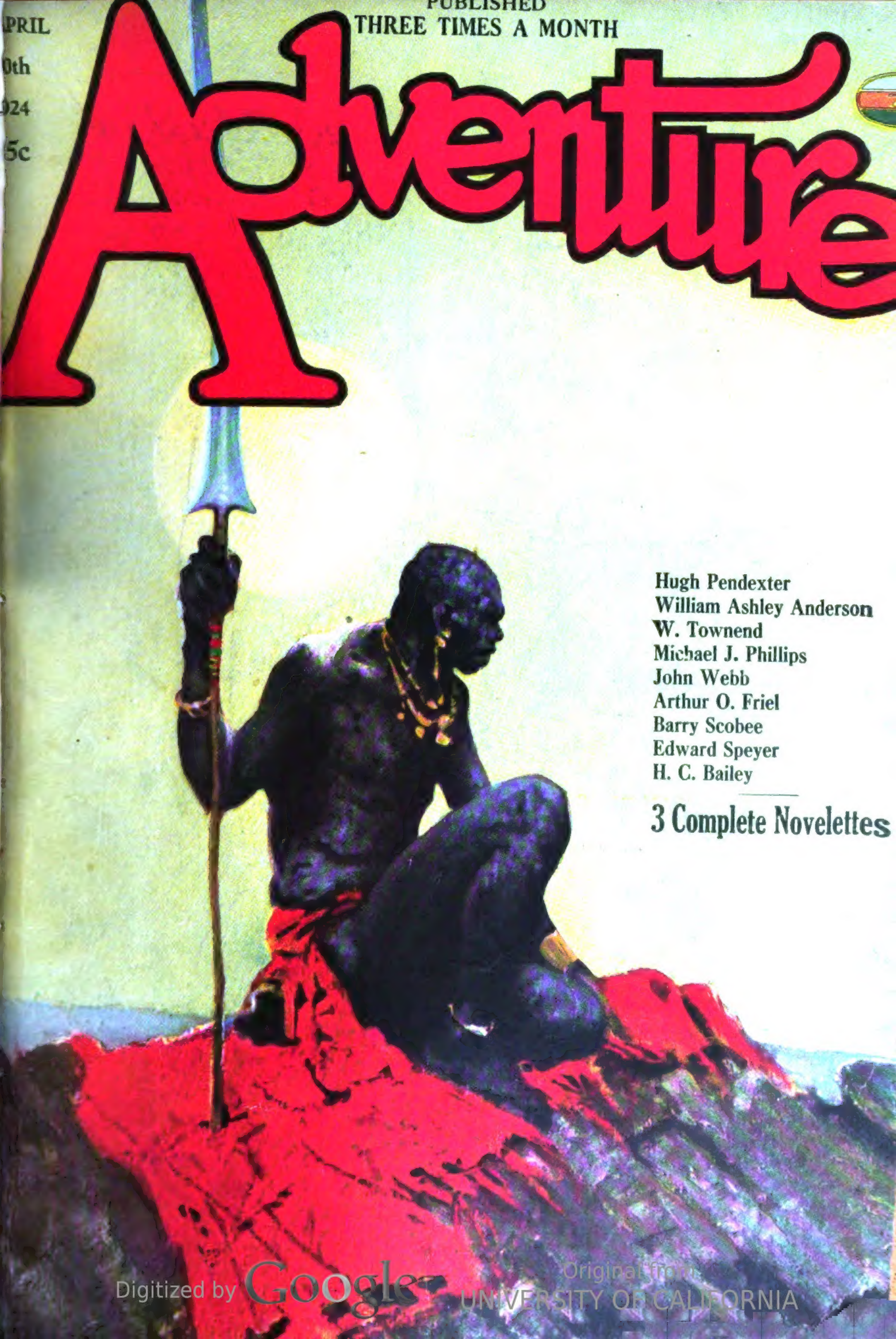

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3 Complete Novelettes

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Windshield	Folding
Rims	Detachable
Cooling	Thermo system
Rear axle gears	Straight teeth
Oiling system	Splash
Chassis lubrication	Grease cups
Back curtain light	Celluloid
Side curtains	Stationary
Finish	Paint, air dried
Gasoline mileage	About 18
Service brake	Clutch combination
Wiring harness	Open
Insurance rating	B
Terms	Cash
Service stations	About 1000

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Cooling	Pump circulation
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Adventure

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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HE WAS a Filipino; his life-work was revenge. "THE *BOBO*," a novelette by Captain Mansfield, complete in the next issue.

KENNARD, captain in the Air Service, finds some new experiences along the Border—Mexicans and smuggling, bull-fights and Latin intrigue. "HUMAN CONTRABAND," a complete novelette by Thomson Burtis, in the next issue.

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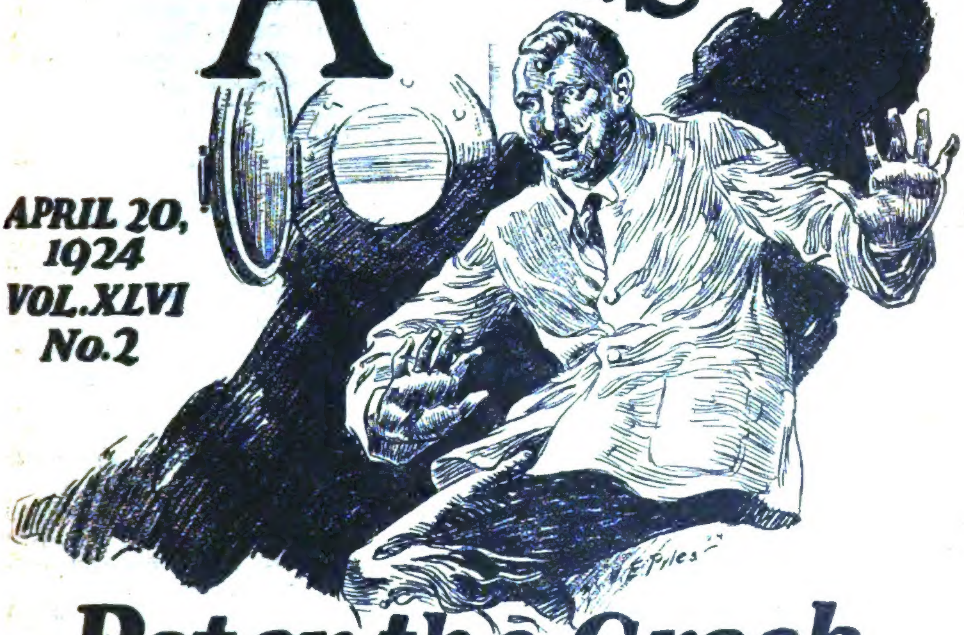

Peter the Greek

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by W. Townend

Author of "Ironfist," "The Tramp," etc.

FREDDIE CARSTOW, the newly appointed second engineer of the S. S. *Samarkand*, sat between the second mate and the third engineer in the fourth row of the ring-side seats. He was tired and sleepy after his journey from the Clyde to Cardiff, and the fight that had dragged wearily on without incident through five rounds threatened to last out the full sixteen. He stifled a yawn unsuccessfully.

The third engineer leaned forward and spoke across him to the second mate.

"Enough to give you a pain in your inside! Why, Mr. Sledwood, I bet you any one of the foc'sle hands we had last trip would have knocked the stuffing out of these two merchants without turning a hair! Look at 'em!"

"They're no good, of course," said the second mate slowly. "That's right, too! But put 'em in a scrap with a feller who's not a boxer, trained or not, and they'd eat him!"

"Don't believe it!" said the third engineer. "These blighters, why, they're too bad to be true! Remember that Irishman we had who fought three men from the—what was the name of the ship now?—that Sunderland hooker on the quay at Genoa, outside Rebecca's! Gosh, that was a scrap! Remember!"

Johnny Sledwood, the second mate of the *Samarkand*, a boyish-looking, fresh-faced

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young man with tired gray eyes and a weak mouth, nodded his head.

"A scrap that, all right," he said. "But then you see, mister, that feller, Mick, was a boxer, so it doesn't count! Now I remember——"

The second engineer yawned openly, too bored to do more than raise his hand in a perfunctory manner toward his mouth. Had he not been the second mate's guest for the evening he would have suggested a move back to the ship. As things were he must sit where he was and pretend, in the intervals of yawning, that he was enjoying himself. Johnny Sledwood and he had been shipmates for a couple of years but had said good-by to each other eighteen months ago and had not met since, until that afternoon when he had joined the *Samarkand* as second engineer. He had liked Johnny always, but their acquaintance had been confined to a casual going ashore together for drinks when other companionship failed.

Johnny Sledwood had had a reputation for wildness and general recklessness of character in those days that had restricted his choice of friends to those of similar tastes. Yet meeting him once more the second engineer had felt instinctively that Johnny was more pleased to see him than their previous knowledge of each other had warranted. There was in his manner something that attracted him. The second engineer could not explain to himself precisely what this attraction was, but after studying him throughout the evening, until he had grown sleepy, he had come to the conclusion that he had improved immeasurably. He seemed graver, steadier in his outlook and wiser. He gave the impression of a man who had passed through some soul-searching experience that had left him older than his years, sadder and more likable.

Again the second engineer yawned. Gosh! He was sleepy!

"Look at 'em!" said the third engineer. "Restin's about all they're fit for!"

Under the shaded arc-lamps the seconds in soiled white sweaters were busy with towels and sponges and buckets of water. The two boxers lay back on their chairs at full length, their arms outstretched, their gloved hands hanging over the white ropes.

They were heavy-weights, hard-hitting, undoubtedly, and determined, but dismally slow. What speed they had shown earlier in the fight had long since left them. They were clumsy, unskilled, lacking in all knowledge of the finer points of their craft, but they were angry and therefore to a certain extent worth watching. The smaller of the two men, and the more popular with the crowd, being a Welshman and a soldier —so the second engineer had gathered from the buzz of talk when he had climbed into the ring, had vivid-red hair—red-rimmed eyes, a freckled face, an irritating grin, sharp foxy features and a white skin.

His opponent—he it seemed was a sailor, with a big following in the cheaper seats, a man of prodigious muscular development—was darker hued. His hair was black and so closely cropped that a wit, also in the cheaper seats, but seated sufficiently far from the boxer's supporters, had won applause by asking him at intervals if he remembered the "'appy and 'ard workin' days" they had spent in prison together.

His eyes were small and close-set and vicious under heavy black brows; his nose had been broken at some time in his career and badly set; his mouth was hard and the thinness of his upper lip marred by a swelling on one side; when he laughed, which was seldom, he showed gaps in his front teeth; his chin was heavy. Even now, as he rested, breathing heavily, his expression was savage, sullen and scornful, as if he despised his opponent for his cheerfulness and his grin and the spectators for their taunts and ridicule.

The referee, a stout, red-faced man, in his shirt sleeves, stood in the center of the ring, his hands in his pockets, his jaws moving as he chewed. He glanced from side to side, watchfully, then he looked first at the red-headed Welshman, the soldier, and then at the dark sailor, and as if the very sight of them made him tired he, too, yawned.

"Seconds out!" called the timekeeper.

At the sound of the gong the two big men rose to their feet wearily, their seconds whipped away the chairs on which they had sat and the sixth round of the fight began.

For a while they circled cautiously around each other, waiting for an opening. There was no sound in the hall but the *patter-patter* of their feet and their heavy breathing. All at once the red-headed Welshman, grinning, drove his right at the other man's face. He moved his head slightly, the blow missed, and they clinched and held each other's arms tight.

"Break away!" said the referee. "Break!"

They clung to each other, wrestling, tugging. The referee hauled them apart.

"Why don't you stiffs fight!" called a voice. "You, 'Erbert, yer dancin' lesson's tomorrer, not tonight! Get on with it!"

Goaded into energy by the insult, both men began to fight. The big, dark man flicked his opponent under the chin with his left, took a hard drive in the face and gave way a step, lashing out with his right as he went back and just touching the red-headed Welshman's shoulder. There was a stream of blood from the dark man's nose. He scowled, crouched a little lower than before, his left close to his face, his right held back a little, wide of his chest, and waited, breathing quickly. Once more the Welshman, still grinning, led with his right to the face and followed with his left in the ribs so that a gasp of joy went up from the crowded benches.

The dark man, growling like an angry bull-dog, shook his head and lashed out furiously with his right, a look of bewilderment in his deep-set eyes, but the other man blocked the blow calmly and upper-cut him with his left. The dark man's head jerked back. Almost one could hear the clicking of the vertebræ in his neck. He rocked on his feet and raised his hands, leaving his body exposed. The Welshman then hit him with all his might over the heart.

His knees bent under him and he fell on his face.

THE timekeeper's voice came clear and loud, counting the seconds. The referee forced the Welshman back to his corner. Slowly, wearily, the dark, bullet-headed man struggled to raise himself. As the timekeeper counted eight he was on his feet once more, swaying a little, a purple patch on his side. Very deliberately, the grin on his lips more pronounced than ever, the Welshman advanced and with a hard drive on the chin, unnecessarily hard, it seemed, in the circumstances, sent him crashing down on to the canvas-covered boards where he lay on his back, knees bent, arms wide.

"—— seven—eight—nine—ten!"

The Welshman had won. His grin became a symbol of superiority over others. He waved his hands and shouted with self-approval. He strutted away from his corner.

The second engineer of the *Samarkand* frowned. What a detestable man the Welshman was: even more detestable, if possible, than the man he had beaten! He was glad that the fight was over.

The seconds picked up their sailor and lifted him on to his chair, and there he sat, toppling sidewise, huge, inert and limp. They laughed at him and tugged at his close-cropped hair and sponged water over his body. The referee, still chewing, approached and stood watching them, a bored look in his face.

The red-headed Welshman posed in the center of the ring, beaming proudly, receiving the applause of his friends as his due.

And then the beaten man opened his eyes and stared stupidly around the hall.

The voice of his tormentor from the cheap seats rose above the din:

"Hi, you from the prison, you with the nose! Wait till yer old woman sees yer! What you got 'ere ain't nothin' to what she'll give yer!"

There was a roar of laughter. The Welshman, his grin now a token of his magnanimity in the hour of triumph, the gloves still on his hands, swaggered toward the man he had beaten.

He held out his hands in the approved style, dramatically.

"You fought well!" he observed.

No winner could have said the time-honored words with greater emphasis or emotion.

"Shake hands!" he said.

At this the dark-haired man stood up and gazed at him with puckered eyes, almost as if seeing him, a stranger, for the first time. Then he scowled ferociously, and before either the referee or the seconds could move hand or foot to stop him he knocked the Welshman down with a blow on the chin, almost exactly as the Welshman had knocked him down in the sixth round of the fight.

The crowd rose with screams of delight. The uproar drowned all articulate protest. Slowly, clumsily, the red-headed man, his face white, staggered to his feet. The beaten man, his opponent, crouching in the position he had adopted for fighting, awaited his onslaught.

The referee placed himself between the two boxers.

"That's enough, you — d'jer hear! We don't want no more of it! Understand!"

He was powerless, however, in the face of outraged pride. The Welshman, gritting his teeth, eyes blazing with Celtic fury, hit him hard in the body. He grunted and collapsed into a sitting posture, and then rolled over on to his side, his hands clasping his stomach, an expression of stupefaction on his countenance.

"Come on!" shouted the black-haired man. "Come on, the 'ole blinkin' lot o' yer! I'm ready!"

He hit out blindly with both fists, ducking his head and stamping his left foot, as if he had before him a dozen enemies, each of whom he was bound to intimidate. The red-headed soldier fell on him. They gripped each other around their naked bodies and toppled with a crash on to the boards where they scuffled and hit and cursed. The seconds dragged them apart while the spectators roared their approval of the spectacle. Two of the seconds had words: one squared up to the other who let fly at him with his left and missed by inches. The referee, white-faced, glassy-eyed, drove them from the ring, and the fight was at an end.

Johnny Sledwood, the second mate of the *Samarkand*, limp with laughter, turned to the second engineer.

"Gosh!" he said. "Freddie, that's the funniest —— mix-up I've seen for years! That scrap after the knock-out was the limit—worth all the other six rounds put together! Did you see that black-haired sailor—what's his name?—put the Welshman down? And the Welshman give the referee the knockout? Lord, lord! You can't beat Cardiff!"

Before the second engineer could say anything a man seated in the row of chairs in front of them turned and spoke.

"Hullo, Mr. Sledwood, you 'ere! Enj'yin' a little frivolity, eh! Thought I 'eard yer voice! 'Ow are yer?"

He was a stout, unwholesome-looking man with a pale, sallow, round face, dark, curly hair, and a mustache with waxed ends, full, sensuous lips, large staring eyes protruding from swollen mauve lids, and a double chin. He smoked a large cigar with a gold band and seemed prosperous.

The second mate, so it appeared, or so the second engineer imagined, was taken aback at seeing him. He mumbled:

"Good evening, Mogger. I never expected to find you here, anyway!"

"Did you like the fight, Mogger?" asked the third.

Mr. Mogger waved a plump hand. Rings flashed in the light of the arc-lamps overhead. In the azure-blue of his tie was a diamond horse-shoe pin. He blew out a cloud of cigar smoke.

"Like it!" he observed. "Well, I dunno!" He had the manner of an expert. Freddie Carstow wondered who in the world Mr. Mogger could be. "It ain't what I'm accustomed to, of course. Give me the National every time! The ol' N. S. C. Ah! That's the place. Cardiff's all right if you ain't got nothin' else, but London's the pick!" He closed one eye knowingly. "That's where you get 'em! Top-notchers! All the same—" he lowered his voice and raised a hand to his mouth— "all the same, gents, I won a hatful of money over that last fight!"

The second engineer had taken a violent dislike to Mr. Mogger, whoever he was. He felt he disliked him more than any one he had seen for some time, more even than the red-headed Welshman. He wondered why the second mate and the third engineer, decent enough chaps both of them, could be friends with such an absolute tout! An outsider, if ever there was one!

Mr. Mogger continued:

"That's me, though, every time! A hatful of money! Ah! You know me, Mr. Sledwood, don't yer! Where there's money to be had for the pickin', there's Alf Mogger at the head of the line! I ain't one to go through life with my eyes shut! Oh, no! An' don't none o' you gents think it! Not me! Every little 'elps, a fiver 'ere an' a fiver there, eh!"

He burst into a yell of laughter at the excellence of his own wit.

"Trust you!" said the second mate moodily.

The second engineer, staring at Mr. Mogger intently, suddenly realized that Mr. Mogger was staring at him. He felt all at once uncomfortable and hoped that his feelings were not visible in his expression. Mr. Mogger was, he put it, poisonous!

And then the second mate said—

"Oh, by the way, Mr. Carstow, this is our steward, Mr. Mogger!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Mogger. "Ah! Pleased to meet yer, mister! 'Ow are yer!"

There was a note of such extreme condescension and affability in his tone that Freddie winced. Nevertheless he took the plump hand offered him and said he was quite well.

"Good!" said Mr. Mogger. He spoke as if a weight had been lifted from his mind. "Good! 'Ope to make yer better acquaintance before we're either of us much older! That is, if you're takin' a trip with us, as I presoom you are!"

He raised his eyebrows and smiled.

"Oh, I forgot," said the second mate. "Sorry! Mr. Carstow is our new second engineer. We were shipmates together, him an' me, on the old *Bohkara*, eighteen months back!"

"An' very nice, too!" said Mr. Mogger. He gave one of his capacious, knowing winks. "Ah, ha! An' so, mister, what you don't know about our friend 'ere, Mr. Sledwood, ain't worth knowin', eh? He, he!"

The second mate laughed awkwardly and went red. The third engineer grinned. The second engineer wondered once more how Sledwood, as good a man as ever walked, could tolerate the greasy witticisms of a man like Mogger!

He was too tired to make conversation. Nor was it worth his while. He was not interested in Mr. Mogger. He was not interested in what Mr. Mogger had to say.

A man in a pink dressing-gown, followed by two men in gray sweaters, made his way through the crowded ring-seats toward the ring.

"Ah!" said the steward. "'Ere's the next fight! Light-weights, thank ——! Well, gents, see you afterwards for a quencher, per'aps!"

He nodded his head and smiled and turned once more to the man seated by his side—a stout man with a pale, greasy face, something after the pattern of his own, and a bald head and a fair, waxed mustache; just the kind of a man, the second engineer decided, that Mr. Mogger would know!

The second mate spoke in a whisper:

"Look here, Freddie, I've just about had enough of this! Don't want to rush you away, o' course, but what say we slide out of it, eh?"

"I'm on," said Freddie. "I've had all I want!"

"What about you, Mr. Trutton?" The second mate spoke to the third engineer.

The third rose to his feet at once.

"Let's go get something to eat an' drink. I'm parched an' famished."

They left the hall, just as the referee, a tall, thin man, not the fat man who had been knocked down by the Welshman, was climbing into the ring.

II

THE S. S. *Samarkand* lay in Roath Basin, Cardiff, waiting her turn at the tips. It was a warm July day. The blue sky overhead was flecked with little white clouds. The air was still and heavy with the scent of engine oil, tar and coal dust. Already the white paint work of the *Samarkand's* bridge and boats and deck-houses was filmed with black.

Dinner over, the second mate, and the second and third engineers, sat on the No. 3 hatch, abaft the saloon, in the sunshine, and smoked their pipes and talked.

The captain, wise man, was on shore. The chief engineer had gone to his room for a nap. The mate was writing a letter.

Mr. Mogger, in his white jacket, his peaked cap tilted on to the back of his head, showing an ornate sausage-shaped curl on his forehead, emerged from the saloon alley-way on to the bridge deck and walked slowly toward the hatch where the three officers were seated.

Mr. Mogger was quite at his ease. Officers or no, he was their equal. In his own opinion, Mr. Mogger was any man's equal. He knew his worth. Not even his worst enemy had ever accused Mr. Mogger of lack of confidence in himself.

The third engineer had said something about the fights of the previous evening.

"Money thrown away!" said the second mate. "There wasn't one hardly that was worth seeing, only that dust-up at the end between those two elephants!"

Mr. Mogger raised himself on his toes and sank once more on his heels and then, with a little chuckle, cleared his throat and took command of the conversation.

"No," he said, addressing the company in general, but keeping his large, staring eyes with their yellowish whites turned toward the second mate. "No, boxin' ain't what it used to be in my day! It ain't! But what can you expect from a bunch like we saw last night! Bute Street toughs, that's what they was! The kind that come into the ring, wipin' the froth of their last 'arf pint of beer from their lips, as yer might say, without exaggeratin' the truth, an' then wonder why it is they can't last out more'n a couple o' rounds! An' us payin' good coin to look at 'em, eh, Mr. Sledwood! A 'old-up, that's what I call it!

"But, lord! These days, soon as a man gets to know one or two little tricks of in-fightin' an' 'ow to keep his feet from trippin' him up, an' what to do with his 'ands when the other bloke's plasterin' it all over him, why, 'is 'head swells so the ord'nary promotor can't afford to pay him 'is price! That's a fact, too! An' as for the good men! The real scrappers! Strike me pink! Why, gents, I'm tellin' you, an' I know, a real scrapper won't climb through the ropes at all unless—win, lose or draw—he's got his money guaranteed him! Not, mind yer, but what he's not in the right! It takes money to indulge in boxin', I tell you!"

Mr. Mogger paused.

"Takes money to indulge in anything," said the second mate gloomily.

"Ah! Mr. Sledwood, an' that's right, too!"

Having recovered his breath, the steward was off once more. He winked solemnly.

"You speak like a book, mister! Takes money to indulge in anything! Anything you want to indulge in, any'ow! But, boxin' now—" Mr. Mogger was unwilling to abandon the topic—"I been a stoodent of boxin' more years now than I like to remember! Yes, mister, once I got started I could tell yer things that would surprize yer. What's more, though yer mightn't think it, seein' me now, I been a bit of a scrapper myself in my time!"

"*You!*" said the third engineer, laughing. "You, Mogger!"

Mr. Mogger was hurt.

"All ri', laugh at me, Mr. Trutton! I don't care. Guess I can stand bein' laughed at!" He smiled, not over amiably. "I can take care of myself, even now, believe me!"

Mr. Mogger had for a moment scented ridicule in the third engineer's laugh, but the earnestness of his expression and the interest he showed in his manner reassured him. He was mollified when the third asked him for details.

"Well, mister, I done a lot of fightin' one way an' another in London. But I quit, just when I was at the top of my form. Had to. I broke my thumb fightin' 'Kid, Skedge, of Birmingham."

He glanced quickly from man to man to note the effect of his words.

"But, o' course, the Kid hadn't won his championship then! They said, 'owever, them what knowed, that but for that thumb o' mine goin' back on me, I'd have eaten him! Another round an' I'd have put him to sleep. Jim Corbett, you remember 'im, o' course, don't yer! Jim was over here this side, in some show or other, an' saw the fight. He told me he hadn't seen better form he didn't know when!"

The second engineer studied Mr. Mogger curiously. That a steward, however pleasant and companionable—Mr. Mogger was neither—should presume to patronize officers, even officers of a tramp like the *Samarkand*, was unbelievable. And if Mr. Mogger was not patronizing the second mate and the third engineer himself, then there was no significance in his condescension of manner, and the blandness of his smile, and his general air of superiority toward them.

And Mr. Mogger, unconscious of what the second engineer was thinking, felt that he had made a good impression on him and was flattered. It gratified him to show these hard working, stupid, unenterprising mates and engineers "'oo was 'oo!" He lighted a cigar and puffed out a cloud of smoke with relish.

"No," he said, his mind still running on the topic of boxing. "No, these 'ere present-day scrappers don't know enough about the game to kill a fly with a four-ounce mitt! All the same, they're dead keen on the money! I don't blame 'em, neither! They're welcome to all they can get, that's my motter! Lord! these days a man is got his work cut out to scrape up enough of the ready to keep a roof over his 'ead or give his best girl a pair o' silk stockin's now an' again, or a piece o' joolry! Ah! You got to look for yerself, ain't yer?"

The third engineer knocked the ashes out of his pipe against his heel.

"Who've you been giving silk stockings to, eh, Mogger?"

"That's my business!" said the steward, chuckling. "What I get from this here job don't keep me in cigar smoke! Ah! an' that's no lie, neither! I got ways o' pickin' up money o' course. A feller 'oo can't make money at sea ain't much, believe me! An' what's more, Alf Mogger didn't open his eyes yesterday for the first time. I know what's what!"

"Some of these days," said the third engineer, "you'll be landin' yourself into trouble."

"Will I!" said Mr. Mogger. "'Ow?"

The third engineer smiled.

"'Ow will I get into trouble?" demanded Mr. Mogger, intent on an explanation. "You're makin' a mistake, mister. I'm clever, I am! —— clever!"

The second engineer spoke for the first time since Mr. Mogger had joined the group.

"You can't tell how trouble comes, can you?" he said. "There's such a thing as being too clever, isn't there?"

The second mate and the third engineer laughed. Mr. Mogger's large eyes gleamed with sudden malice. This here second engineer, then, hadn't been impressed at all. Oh, ho! 'adn't he! Well, he'd have to see about it!

Mr. Mogger was not accustomed to being laughed at by mates and engineers. There was no harm in laughter as laughter, but laughter directed against himself was something no feller could be expected to stand! His dignity had been touched. He found himself cheapened and degraded before his inferiors! Nevertheless he knew, knew as certainly as if some one had told him, that to show offence would be to lower himself and degrade himself still further.

He smiled coldly. He flicked the ash off his cigar on to the iron deck. Then he spoke in a matter-of-fact tone of voice which he flattered himself would have deceived the most observant:

"Well, I got work to do, if you ain't! Better be movin', eh? So long, gents!"

With a nod of his head and a beaming flash of his gold-filled, discolored teeth, Mr. Mogger turned and made his way in the direction of the saloon.

"THE —— dirty little twister!" said the second mate with sudden venom. "Gosh! He makes me sick! Freddie, you've made Mogger sore! He's a bad man to get in wrong with. Better steer clear of him!"

Freddie Carstow glanced at the second mate quickly. For a brief moment he could not believe that he was in earnest. The second mate's face looked strangely worn and grim.

"I'm not afraid of Mogger!" he said.

The second mate gave a shrug of his shoulders.

"Daresay not! But Mogger's the big noise on this —— packet, anyway! The old man himself couldn't get rid of him."

"Never heard of a steward yet," said Freddie, "that a captain couldn't get rid of if he wanted to! Where's the catch? What makes Mogger an exception?"

"Mogger knows too much, that's why!" said the third. "The old man's scared if he gives him the push, Mogger'll raise —— from Dan to Beersheba! He owns a house and a bit of property beside. The old man, I mean. How did he rake up the money to buy it, eh?"

"A house!" said the second mate sharply. "That's nothing! Mogger owns about a dozen houses!" He broke off and puckered his forehead in a troubled frown. "I wish to Heaven I'd never set eyes on the tyke!"

He rose to his feet and stretched out his arms and yawned.

"Well, I'm like Mogger in one thing: I've got work to do, if you two engineers haven't!"

"Work!" said Freddie. "From what the chief keeps saying we've got work enough to last us till Christmas! Mr. Trutton, we'd better be getting down to the engine room!"

He slid off the hatch and strolled to the rails and threw the stub of his cigaret into the water. For a while he stood looking toward the shore and the other steamers taking on board their cargoes of coal under the tall tips. And then his attention was drawn by the approach of a boat, rowed by a man in a blue jersey, with a lady in black seated in the stern.

He watched without moving, wondering idly who could be coming out to the *Samarkand*.

The boat bumped into the foot of the accommodation ladder. The lady in black clutched at the rope dangling into the water and stepped out of the boat and began to climb. Freddie recollected that by now the third engineer would be in the engine room and he turned quickly.

The lady in black, however, had reached the deck. She called to him imperiously:

"Hi, mister! Just a minute, if you please!"

She was a small, thin woman, dressed in shabby black of some thick material, though the day was hot. In her pale, pinched face was a faint, unhealthy flush of pink; her nose was sharp and thin; her eyes were brown and anxious behind steel-rimmed spectacles. She looked shabby and hot and tired and almost scared. It was as if the strangeness of her surroundings, the bridge deck of the *Samarkand*, had startled her.

Freddie waited for her to speak.

"Are you one of the mates?" she demanded.

"I'm the second engineer," he replied. It flashed into his mind that here was a relation of the captain's. "The mate's on board, if you'd like to see him!"

She shook her head.

"It's the chief steward I want, Mr. Mogger." She paused. "I'm Mrs. Mogger!"

The little woman tilted her chin and stared at the second engineer gravely, as much as to imply that though she quite realized the importance of her husband's position, nevertheless he, the second engineer, need have no fear on that account. Or so Freddie Carstow, struggling with a desire to laugh, felt.

"Mr. Mogger's in his room," he said. And then he saw Mr. Mogger himself.

Mr. Mogger had had a couple of stiff glasses of the old man's whisky and any sense of injury had for the time being faded into the background of his memory. He drew near, chuckling, twisting his mustache.

Mrs. Mogger's eyes were alight with happiness. She blushed.

"'Ow are yer, Emma!" said Mr. Mogger. "Come to see yer poor old husband, eh! Why didn't you tell me the time you was goin' to arrive?"

"But I did!" said Mrs. Mogger plaintively. "I did, Alfie. Didn't you get my letter?" She put her hand on his arm. "Not that I looked for yer at the station, Alfie; you're busy I know!"

She reached up and kissed him.

Mr. Mogger winked playfully at the second engineer over the top of his wife's head.

As he climbed down the long ladders into the dark engine room, lighted by slush lamps, Freddie Carstow wondered how came it that a man like Mogger could keep the love of his wife.

In the engine room the third engineer stood by his side and told him that the second mate had borrowed money from Mogger, and that Mogger had him tight. He pointed toward the bench.

"As tight as that vice yonder, and he's screwin' it tighter! You look out for him, Mr. Carstow! The second mate's right—Mogger's a bad man to get in wrong with!"

III

THE S. S. *Samarkand* was rolling sluggishly through the heavy swell of the Bay of Biscay toward Finisterre.

The evening was warm and still.

In the stokehold it was very hot. Teame, "Pug" Teame, the big fireman on the third engineer's watch, bare to the waist, stood under the cool current of air that filtered down the ventilator and breathed deeply. He was a big, broad shouldered man with close-cropped black hair and a broken nose and little deep set eyes under dark, lowering brows. Looking at Teame one had an impression of stubbornness and genial truculence and general dislike of authority.

"It's 'ot as the nob of ——!" he observed. " 'Ot as that last night in Cardiff, before I signed on this here stinkin', rotten rattrap!"

He sighed, and then, glancing quickly toward the starboard boiler where the other fireman, Carris, a little Scotsman, was peering into a furnace, he slid his hand to his hip pocket and drew out a flat bottle. He extracted the cork and drank deeply, the liquor going *glug-glug-glug* down his throat. Once more he sighed, "Ah!" He lowered the bottle, replaced the cork, and with a feeling of disappointment saw that Carris was watching him, his eyes wide open, his lips parted in a grin under a little bristling mustache.

Carris licked his lips ostentatiously and made noises expressing thirst and rolled his eyes and clutched at his throat dramatically.

Teame growled his displeasure at this pantomime.

"What d'yer want, eh?"

Then a sudden spasm of kindliness toward his fellow men, provided they were not present in bulk, spurred him to unwonted generosity—

" 'Ere!"

He held out the bottle.

"'Ave it, if you want to, but, for the love of jumping Moses, lad, go slow!"

Carris, a small, thick-set man, alert, quick in his movements, a grin on his wizened, gray face, took the bottle without a word, tilted his head back, thrust the neck into his mouth and drank.

He respected Teame's request with regret and returned the bottle while yet another inch of whisky remained untouched.

"Good on yer!" said the big fireman.

"Thank ye!" said Carris. "Thon's sav't ma life!"

A scrunching of feet from the tunnel that led from the stokehold to the bunkers made the big fireman thrust the bottle hastily into his hip-pocket once more. Catwill, the trimmer, emerged from the door of the starboard cross-bunker into the tunnel and stood under the raised watertight door in the bulkhead, peering into the stokehold. All at once he sniffed. He had an acute, highly cultivated sense of smell.

"Whisky!" he said suddenly. "Who's been suppin' whisky!"

He entered the stokehold and looked with suspicion at the two firemen.

Neither Teame nor Carris said a word. They gazed at him blankly, expressing in their countenances amazement at such a question. They shook their heads.

The trimmer, bitterly incensed at this obvious denial of what was proved beyond doubt by the evidence of his nostrils, spat.

"Well," he said, "that's good! —— good! I can smell whisky. One of you two's got it! I want a drink. Come on!"

Teame patted him on his shoulder with an air of good fellowship that was almost fatherly.

"What are you playin' at, Catwill? Tell us now, what *are* yer playin' at? Do you think us had whisky third day of the voyage? Rubbish! Why, you mean ter say you think so bad of us we wouldn't share our last drop with you if we 'ad any! I'm ashamed of yer!"

Offended pride silenced him. He was an honest man, was Teame. A sharer with his friends of whatever luxuries his modest means enabled him to provide. And here was Catwill doubting his word!

Carris flung a shovel of coal on to one of his fires.

"Catty," he said, "listen to me! Ye're makin' a mistak'! Whusky is the root of a' evil! I ken thon fer a fac'! Aye, I'm tellin' ye! Col' watter's guid enoo' fer the likes o' you! Me an' Pug here, we're vera diff'rent! We're grown men!"

"I'm as grown a man as you are!" said the trimmer, flaring into a temper. "Aye, an' as good a man any day of the seven! No use makin' a song an' dance about it, I want a drink of whisky. You got some, I know."

"For —— sake!" said Teame, "shut up! You an' yer old whisky! I got a thirst on me now I wouldn't swap for a quid in Bute Street, but 'ere it's torture, an' you're makin' it worse with yer jabber! Drop it!"

Catwill was no more than half-convinced. The smell of whisky as he entered the stokehold had been unmistakable. Some one was lying, either Teame or Carris, probably the pair of them! But Teame was too big a man to argue with. Carris, though no larger than himself, was too fierce in his tempers, too violent, to dare tackle on such a matter. Catwill was a timid being, but with the most perfect scent in the world in his nostrils and injustice rankling in his heart he felt that he had cause for grievance.

"Some one's been drinkin' whisky!" he complained. "An' you're holdin' back on me!"

"Whisky!" exclaimed Teame with a yelp of irritation. "Mebbe, you'll be demanin' beefsteak an' 'chips' or champagne wine served yer! What next, me lord! Ho, not 'arf!"

He turned his back on the trimmer to pick up his shovel and hide his grin.

"I ain't got no whisky, I tell yer!"

As he stooped the outline of the flat bottle became visible to the trimmer's eager eyes.

In his unregenerate youth before the sea had called him and the attentions of the police had made life a burden to a sensitive soul, Catwill, the trimmer, had been known among his intimates as "Davie, the Dip," and famed for light fingered enterprise and initiative in the streets of Cardiff, his native city.

"Pug" Teame, his wide mouth set in a sly grin, chuckling to himself, took a step toward the port boiler. He felt a slight pressure on his hip. At another time he might have paid no heed. But now, in a sudden alarm, he clapped his hand to his pocket. The bottle had gone. He turned once more, wild rage flaring through his being.

"You —— mis'rable pickpocket!" he roared.

He made a sudden dash at the trimmer. "Give it 'ere!"

Catwill, terrified now that his theft had been discovered, took a step back in the direction of the bunkers. Teame clawed at his bare arm. He yelled with the fear of pain and punishment to follow, and dropped the bottle on to the iron plates of the stokehold floor.

Teame's anger gave place to a gentle melancholy. In a crisis so dreadful he could rise above the pettiness of revenge. The whisky was lost. Nothing, not even his big fists, could restore his treasure.

The three men stood and stared sadly at the fragments of broken glass and the pool of whisky trickling through the layer of coal dust.

"——!" said Carris. "Catwill, ye're in need o' kickin'! Stealin' a man's whusky!"

Catwill was terrified.

" 'Ow did I know it was whisky!" he whined. "I thought you was speakin' the truth when you say that you 'adn't none! 'Ow did I know you was sayin' what wasn't true! I thought—why, I thought it was cold tea that you 'ad!"

In the face of a lie so stupendous what was a man to do? Cold tea! Teame stared at the trimmer in dumb amazement.

And then the second engineer came hurrying into the stokehold between the boilers, hot with anger.

"Holy suffering martyrs!" he said. "What in —— are you loafers up to?"

He flung back one of the furnace doors and cursed.

"You, what's your —— name: Teame!" He spoke to the big fireman who had not attempted to move. "What the —— are you doing! —— your eyes! Because I'm not on top of you the whole time you do as you —— well like! As soon as something goes wrong that I've got to attend to you let the steam drop to blazes! Look at that fire! Suffering ——! Do you think I've nothing more to do than to take lodgings in here? How the blazes do you imagine we're going to carry a full head of steam if you lousy Hottentots don't do your work?"

He moved from fire to fire, swinging back the doors, and swearing bitterly. A man might just as well go to sea with a bunch of Dutch farmers as the firemen he had! What did they imagine they were—ornaments? Each one of the big man's fires was burning low, even the little Scotsman had, apparently, let things drift.

Freddie Carstow came back to the port boiler.

"Teame," he said, "you let the steam back to a hundred and seventy-five when you cleaned the fires and now here we are again, revolutions all to smithereens, steam away off, fires burning like nothing on earth and a bad relief at eight bells! Haven't you got any —— common sense at all?"

Teame worked slowly, doggedly, but with an air of hostility and suppressed fury.

His dark brows were bent over his small, beady eyes. His lower lip protruded sullenly. Each time he bent to thrust his square-bladed shovel under the pile of coal on the plates at his back he showed his teeth in a snarl.

To the second engineer his looks were vaguely reminiscent of some one he had once known or seen or sailed with.

He wondered where he had met him before.

Freddie Carstow believed in treating the men under him as human beings, with the same feelings and instincts as himself; but this man, Teame, was one of those exceptions on whom kindness would be mere waste of time and energy. He would understand harshness, certainly, and bad language and contempt. Anything less brutal he would regard as weakness.

"Seems you don't know much about firing!" said Freddie.

The fireman, goaded into a reply, glared at him out of the corners of his eyes.

"I know my work, mister. No one can't teach me nothin' about firin'!"

"Unteachable, eh! Is that it? Or are you another of those —— theorists? Why don't you put your theories into practice, then? You pay a little more attention to your job and less to chewing the rag and you'll make a better fireman!"

"I'm as good a fireman as there is on the ship!" growled Teame.

He was a slow thinker, but this second engineer was, he gathered, making fun of him. Oh! Was he! Well, then, engineer or no, he'd teach him!

"As good a fireman as there is on the ship!" he grumbled.

He stood in front of the second engineer, his head thrust forward belligerently, his shoulders rounded, his left hand grasping his shovel, his right fist clenched and held some distance away from his damp, naked body. "As good a fireman as there is on the ship!"

And then the second engineer remembered the dark man with the close-cropped head of hair and laughed.

"So it's you, is it? Teame, eh! Huh! good fireman, did you say? About as good a fireman as you are a boxer!"

Now this was to Teame the unforgivable insult. The effects of the vast quantities of drink he had taken since losing his fight with the red-headed Welshman, however, still gripped him. Quickness of decision, in such an emergency, was difficult.

"Boxer!" he said slowly. "I'm a boxer, yes, mister. Knock your head off any day of the week you like!"

The second engineer's eyes narrowed, yet he still smiled.

"If I was crazy enough to let you, you might! Do you think I'd be standing by, watching you do it, though, you great mummy!" In his hand was a big monkey wrench which he had been using in the engine room. "I'd probably give you one with this to go on with. That'd settle you. You'd like a chance of tackling some one twenty-eight pounds lighter than yourself, wouldn't you? Though, by gum! after the show you put up against that Welshman two weeks ago, I'm just the weight you're looking for!"

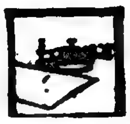
And then at the thought of the big man's desperate effort after he had lost the fight his anger vanished and he laughed.

"You do your work properly and don't waste time jawing so much! I dunno if you've been drinking or not, but if you have, look out for squalls, that's all! I'm easy going enough as a rule, Teame, but if you're out for trouble you'll get it handed you on a silver dish with a silver ladle!"

After the second engineer had gone back into the engine room the fireman unburdened himself to Carris and the trimmer.

"Now, you look 'ere, the pair o' yer! That man, that perisher what's just gone out, he's torn it! See! He's said things I wouldn't take from no man, not even me own mother! Now, I'll tell yer, the pair o' yer, 'e's asked for trouble! Trouble 'e'll 'ave! Talkin' to a man like me that way! 'E thinks 'e's the King of England, does he? Well, then, he ighn't! He's Mister Stick-'s-'ead-into-other-people's-business, that's 'oo 'e is! I'll get him, sure as my nyme's Willyum Teame! I'll ram 'is —— teeth down 'is throat, I will! Talkin' to me like that! Why, my ——! 'E come to me an' asked me to lick 'im, 'e did! He wants a lickin', that young man, an' 'e'll get it! You watch! 'E's come to the right shop!"

IV



THE second mate's young wife had presented him with twins. Two boys. The telegram had been received on board the *Samarkand* early in the afternoon.

In the *Soleil d'Or*, a crowded, noisy café at Marseilles, more commonly known among seafarers as Pondicherry Sam's, the proud but bewildered father entertained the mate, the second engineer and the third. It was an expense, naturally, but the occasion demanded champagne.

"Twins don't come every day in the year, do they?" he kept saying. "It makes you think, doesn't it!"

"Mr. Sledwood," said the third engineer, "you ought to be proud!"

"I am proud," said the second mate. "Rather!"

Kesham, the mate, a thin, ascetic-looking man, with a clean-shaven, humorous mouth, and a nature that not even years of frustrated hopes had soured, chuckled.

"But puzzled, eh!" he said. "Lookin' ahead into the future, is that it? Wait till you've been married as many years as I have and you'll accept what Providence brings you without worryin' about ways an' means! Here!"

He beckoned to the waiter.

"Jules, another bottle, the same as before!"

"A couple of boys," said the second mate.

He had been existing in a more or less dazed condition of mind ever since he had read the telegram. It was difficult to picture himself a father. It was even more difficult to picture that slip of a girl of his a mother. He was happy, of course, tremendously happy; but a little scared! The mate was right, he was looking ahead into the future. He saw years of hard work, economy, saving. Worry and pride conflicted.

"They'll take some feeding," he reflected aloud. "I'm —— glad, by gum, it's a short voyage! Lord! Marseilles and home again, light, for another cargo! Gosh! the sooner the better! I wish we were sailing tomorrow!"

"When my first was born," said the mate, "I never saw her until she was eighteen months old an' learning algebra!"

"What's that?" said the second mate, startled. "Algebra!" He grinned. "Three weeks will be about all I can stand."

He held out his hand and watched it shaking.

"Look at that! Nerves all to blazes, eh!" He laughed at himself. "I've had one drink and I feel just about tanked! Shows what I'm like, doesn't it!"

The other three men watched him and listened to what he said with sympathy. They understood what he was feeling. The strain of the weeks of waiting was over; he had had his news and now he was suffering from the reaction. And so they laughed at him and joked and made elaborate plans for the future of his two sons. One would be a bishop, the other a jockey. They would live to keep their old father out of the workhouse or perjure themselves to prove alibis to save him from penal servitude! They would be famous, each of them, in their respective lines! The bishop would own racehorses and the jockey would ride 'em! The jockey would marry a chorus girl, the bishop, secretly eating his heart out in envy, would tie the knot! The bishop would become Archbishop of Canterbury and would make a fortune by backing his brother's horse for the Derby! The jockey would retire and become a bookie and the archbishop would be his partner on the side!

But while they laughed and pretended to make fun of the second mate and his twins, the mate and the two engineers knew exactly what difficulties lay ahead of him. They liked him and were sorry for him, but if the news he had had made him glad, then they were glad, too.

"Of course," said the second mate, "it makes a man think, don't it! It's a responsibility!"

The second bottle of champagne had arrived. The mate filled the four glasses.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the second mate's babies! Good health, long life, prosperity, and may they be as good men, each of them, as their dad!"

And for a moment the second mate sat blinking at the lights overhead, unable to see clearly through a mist that clouded his eyes.

"Thank you!" he said. He grinned. "Lord! getting sentimental, ain't I!" He lapsed once more into thoughtfulness. "Yes," he said, "it makes a man think. Things that didn't seem to amount to much once, well, they're like —— big mountains! Know what I mean? Things that didn't matter once, well, they matter now! God! Me, out here, aboard ship, just doing my job, and the wife at home, going through all that by herself!"

He tapped the marble top of the table with his fingers and frowned.

"Things *are* diff'rent. Don't care what you say! Me, with a wife and twins, eh!" He laughed. "Two —— little tykes and doing well, all three of 'em! Well, I guess I've got to hustle a living a —— sight harder than I've been doing, haven't I?"

He raised his glass and nodded toward the mate.

"Good luck, Mr. Kesham, here's how!"

And then the second engineer, who had been watching him with a half-amused smile, saw all at once that his expression had changed. His eyes had lost their light and cheerfulness; he looked tired and subdued and depressed, as he normally looked on board the *Samarkand*.

Apparently the other two had noticed nothing. The third engineer, married two years, was telling the mate an anecdote about his daughter, aged nine months—an anecdote that the second engineer had heard many times already. What was more, in spite of the disparity in age between them, the mate was actually listening with a show of interest. Probably, thought the second, because he himself had a story equally dull and pointless which he would on the first opportunity tell the third! That is to say, if he cared to unburden himself before Mr. Mogger. For it was the arrival of Mr. Mogger and a lady friend that had caused the sudden change in the appearance of the second mate.

The table at which the mates and engineers of the *Samarkand* sat was in a corner of the big, crowded café. Two elderly, bearded Frenchmen, who had been sitting at a small round table next theirs, finished their cognac and rose to their feet to go. It was to this table, apparently the only empty table in the place, that Mr. Mogger and his lady friend were being conducted by a perspiring waiter.

Mr. Mogger's most frequent boast was that on shore he made a point of associating with wealth and fashion. He might be a steward on board ship, but on dry land he was a citizen of the world. He could hold his own with the best. So now, a gentleman at large, he carried himself as one perfectly aware of his own importance. As on the evening of the fight at Cardiff when Freddie Carstow had first set eyes on him, he wore a suit of blue serge, with a diamond horseshoe pin in his tie, and diamond rings on his fingers. He had, out of respect for the company or his companion, removed his straw hat, encircled by the crimson and blue Guards' ribbon, to which not even Mr. Mogger's most enthusiastic admirers could have said he was entitled.

Since coming ashore he had had his hair cut, but the enormous sausage curl on his forehead remained in all its oil glory. His mustache had been trimmed, but as usual its fulness ended in two little waxed points that stood out almost at right angles from his cheeks. His sallow face was damp, for the night was hot; his large lips were parted; his staring eyes, with the yellowish whites protruding from the swollen mauve lids, kept glancing quickly from side to side as he advanced.

The waiter drew out the two chairs and bowed.

The lady with Mr. Mogger was of medium height, but of immoderate plumpness. She had pink cheeks and dark-red hair. Her manner was refined and ladylike, her glance knowing, her speech arch. She wore much jewelry. Around her neck, almost concealed by her double chin in front, there hung a necklace of large pearls. On her fingers were many rings. She was dressed in a frock of some lilac stuff with short sleeves that revealed her plump arms and a low-cut bodice. A black hat was perched rather too far forward on her piled-up hair. And though her appearance might perhaps be considered by the casual looker-on peculiar, or so thought Freddie Carstow, the fact remained that she was thoroughly pleased with herself and the sensation her arrival had caused.

As, indeed, was Mr. Mogger.

"Sit down, Gertikins!" he said.

She slapped him playfully with a long white glove and smiled tenderly.

Mr. Mogger picked up the wine list. Frowning, he flicked the pages. Then he spoke to the waiter sharply:

"Look 'ere, *garçon*, none o' yer nonsense with me! Champagne! Understand! None o' your —— slops! I want the best. The best's none too good for my lady friend an' yours truly, neither! *Le meilleur n'est pas trop bon pour moi et madame!* Get me! *Tout suite!* Get a move on!"

He sat down.

The lady laughed.

"'Alf," she said, "how you do run on?"

Her English was in its accent and idiom no less imperfect than was her companion's French. But whereas Mr. Mogger had picked up his French in many years of voyaging to foreign parts the lady had learned her English in England.

"First thing you know," she observed, "you'll be attractin' attention an' what would I do, then, eh?"

"What you always do!" said Mr. Mogger. "Be'ave like a perfect lady, o' course!"

The lady gave a shrill shriek. Her manner became kittenish in the extreme.

"Git on!" she said, and again she slapped Mr. Mogger with her glove.

Mr. Mogger chuckled and took hold of her hand.

"Little 'and!" he said.

He beamed and his mauve tongue moistened his purple lips. He looked his beastliest. His speech was thick.

* * *

THE second engineer and the second mate who sat on the same side of the table watched him and his companion without saying a word. The little third engineer and the mate, with their backs to the big room, still discussed marriage and wives and children from the point of view of husbands and fathers who saw their families for no more than a week or two in the year.

And then, without warning, Mr. Mogger's lady friend became indignant.

She raised her chin and frowned and stared haughtily at the second engineer.

"Alfie," she said, "look there! Ask him what he sees in my personal appearance what ain't right! What's he want, eh?"

Mr. Mogger, ready to be angry if the occasion demanded, turned in his chair. His frown vanished and he laughed.

"Well, well, this is a surprize! 'Ow are we all, eh?"

The mate and the third engineer turned and looked at him.

Both murmured a vaguely polite greeting and wished that Mr. Mogger would have sense enough to know when he was not wanted. Why the —— couldn't the man keep to himself?

Mr. Mogger had spent a very pleasant evening on shore. Already he had drunk heavily. At no time lacking in confidence, he was now overwhelming in his effusiveness of manner and fussiness.

"Well, well!" he repeated.

He jumped to his feet briskly.

"So 'ere we all are! Mr. Kesham, if you move a bit round nearer the second mate, an' if you, Mr. Trutton, will foller the mate, why, then, there'll be room for me an' my friend!"

Without waiting for a reply, absolutely convinced that he was a welcome addition to the party, he inserted his chair between Freddie Carstow's and the third engineer's.

"Here, Gertie, up yer get!"

The plump lady in lilac stood up, giggling.

"Gimme your chair, that's right! Now, then, that's all snug an' comfortable, ain't it?"

Their power of refusal blunted by Mr. Mogger's calm disregard of any possible objection, the mate and the third engineer moved their chairs as they were asked. In this they were weak, but the alternative was unpleasant to contemplate. The second mate, struggling between his hatred of the steward and a desire not to offend him, smiled feebly in answer to his cordial, " 'Ow are yer, Mr. Sledwood!" and said he was well. But the second engineer, his dignity outraged by Mr. Mogger's air of supremacy, merely nodded his head as the steward beamed at him.

"Now," said Mr. Mogger, " 'ow much better this is, ain't it! For all of us! Next thing I got to do is to interjuice the lady. *Cherchay la famme*, eh! Hah, hah!"

He turned to the plump lady seated between the third engineer and himself, her hands in her lap, her back very straight, her eyes glowing with pride.

"Gertie, I want yer to meet some shipmates o' mine. Mr. Trutton, on yer left, the third engineer—Tommy, we call 'im, Tommy Trutton! Mr. Kesham, the mate —chief officer, officially, eh, Mr. Kesham! unofficially, ol' 'Killy'! Mr. Sledwood, the second mate, or 'Jo-Jo'! An' last but not least, Mr. Carstow, the second engineer!"

Not quite certain of the second engineer as yet, Mr. Mogger was doubtful whether to add a cheery witticism or not. Nevertheless he did not like the second engineer and he wished, as it were, to put him in his right place, publicly if tactfully.

"Mr. Carstow," he said, addressing the lady, "is what you might call one of these here firebrands! Always bent on assertin' of himself! Lookin' for trouble, like!"

He turned to Freddie.

"Mr. Carstow, I 'ad a talk with our pugilistic friend, Teame, the other day. 'E's feelin' sore with you for something you said to 'im! Not that that's anythin' to lose sleep over, o' course, but them boxin' men they're apt to forget themselves, ain't they! An', fireman or no fireman, Teame's a 'ard 'itter, an' seems to me he's after yer blood!"

Freddie Carstow nodded.

"Good!" he said.

"Thought I'd give yer the tip," said Mr. Mogger pleasantly. "An' now, gen'men, this is my ol' friend——"

Here the lady uttered a little shriek.

"Naughty!" she said. "Alf, how dare you!"

Mr. Mogger was much amused.

"There, I been an' gone an' done it again."

"Brute!" said the lady, slapping his hand.

"The ladies don't like that, do they, Mr. Trutton!" Mr. Mogger winked. "My *young* friend, I oughter have said, oughtn't I! Or my little friend, eh! Any'ow, this here is Gertie, Gertie Tawes, Mrs. Tawes." He lowered his voice and spoke in a penetrating whisper audible to everybody at the table, including his little friend. " 'Usband killed in the war. Very sad, indeed!"

Mrs. Tawes, as if playing up to her cue, looked sad at once.

"She an' me," said the steward, "met accidental this ev'nin'. Quite a co-incidence, as yer might say! We 'adn't met for—for——"

"A year or more," said the lady quickly. "I'm travelin' for my health. After my dear husband was called away I had a—a breakdown. A woman all alone in the world is so helpless!"

A less helpless woman than Mrs. Tawes had never existed—judging from her appearance, at least. But the four officers of the *Samarkand*, all criticism disarmed by the calm superiority of their ship's steward, listened and nodded their heads and murmured that it was very dreadful.

"So young, too!" said Mrs. Tawes. "And we were so happy!"

She dabbed her eyes with the corner of her handkerchief.

"There, there!" said Mr. Mogger, displaying a not unmanly emotion. "There! Now, Gertie, you got to bear up!" He looked at the four men. "She gets like this when she thinks of 'im! But—there! we won't talk of it!"

And then he winked, as much as to convey his personal opinion that the late Tawes was an excrescence on the face of the earth and that the sorrowing widow was well rid of him.

"We can't question the ways of Providence, yer know! 'Ere we are, bloomin' like lilies of the valley—" Mr. Mogger as a lily of the valley made the second engineer choke—"an' tomorrer gone—you know the quotation, don't yer!"

He twisted the points of his mustache, sat back in his chair and grinned. And then the bottle on the table attracted his attention. He studied the label and the gold leaf on the neck intently.

"Champagne!" he said. "Champagne!" He sniffed. "H'm! it's not a brand I approve of myself, personally my taste runs to something a leetle better, but—champagne's champagne, ain't it?"

The idea of mates and engineers drinking champagne annoyed him. He couldn't get over it. His easily aroused curiosity made him speak:

"Joyful occasion may I ask! Celebration, per'aps! Or what?"

The second mate dolefully aware that the steward was eyeing him suspiciously acknowledged the truth of his guess.

"In a way," he said. "Yes."

"Ah!" said the steward. "You 'ad a wire this mornin', didn't you! I knew it!"

He waited, eyebrows raised, teeth showing in a grin of anticipation.

"Well!" said the second mate, with an effort, "it's twins!"

"Oh ——!" said the steward.

He burst into a shout of laughter and pounded the table with the palm of his hand.

"Gertie, my dear, our young friend 'ere has got twins! Well, well! Put it there!"

He thrust out his hand, weighted with rings.

"Congratulations, mister! I'm glad!" He roared himself red in the face. "But, holy caterpillars! Twins!"

He patted his lady friend on the shoulder and raised a little cloud of white powder.

"Twins, eh! He'll 'ave his 'ands full now, won't 'e?"

"I'm sure I don't know!" said Mrs. Tawes, implying from her manner that she considered the steward's conversation the least little bit indelicate. "How should I?"

Mr. Mogger turned and waved his hands to the waiter.

" 'Ere, *garçon*, you, *champagne pour moi, un magnum!* The same as before! *La même, compree! Le meilleur n'est pas trop bon!*" He chuckled. "This is one of those occasions, gen'men, when we spend our money like princes! We'll drink in one minute to the second mate's little fam'ly, an' may they foller in father's footsteps, as the song used to say, in the footsteps of dear ol' dad! It's been my invariable 'abit not to economize when there's a little matter o' good fellowship an' congraterlation to be considered! A celebration like this demands rej'icin'! O' course, at sea, aboard ship, well, we got our dooties, individual an' collective! As we all know. There's the engine room an' the bridge we got to consider as well as the interior economy of the vessel, which—" he turned to Mrs. Tawes—"which, Gertie, as yer know, is in my 'ands!"

"Come orf it!" said Gertie, pushing him away from her. "You keep your hands busy with that, then, an' let my waist be!"

Mr. Mogger winked. "Well, on shore, then, a man's a man! That's what I was leadin' up to! We're all gathered together 'ere to celebrate a j'yful occasion! The birth o' twins!"

Freddie Carstow had been listening in a kind of dream. At times he felt convinced that the steward lived in a world of fantasy, and that he really imagined himself to be what he pretended, a thoroughly honorable man, a gentleman, sought after by people worth knowing. At other times, he felt, however, that Mogger was merely indulging in an elaborate deception and was playing a part with great zest for reasons of his own, sincere in only one thing, his belief that no one on board the *Samarkand* knew him for what he was.

But how could any one as alert as Mogger, studying the faces of the two mates and the third engineer, remain for one moment under the impression that his presence was either welcome or desirable? The more he considered him the more puzzled did the second engineer become.

The man was without the ordinary, elementary instincts of decency.

"Twins!" he said. "Oh, lord!"

There were tears in his eyes. He threw back his head and roared out loud.

"It beats anything I ever heard. Mr. Sledwood," he said, leaning forward, and pointing with his forefinger, "it's what you might call launchin' out into reckless 'abits! Eh, what? You married men oughter be more careful!"

The second engineer thought of the faded little woman in black who loved her Alf, and a wild rage took possession of him. What a priceless hog! The second mate's face had turned a dusky red. He glared at the steward who met his gaze blandly with a chuckle.

Mrs. Tawes, who seemed all at once aware of the misery in the young man's eyes, gave Mr. Mogger a dig in the ribs.

"Chuck it!" she said. "Ain't you gettin' tired of the sound of your own voice yet? Give it a rest!"

THE waiter arrived with the magnum of champagne. Mr. Mogger, recalled to the serious side of life, inspected the bottle gravely with an insucking of his breath.

"Ah!" he said. "That's the lotion the doctor ordered. The same as before. Go to it, gents! Here, I got to pay, ain't I? Well, it won't kill me. Plenty more where this comes from!"

He groped in his pocket and counted out the money into the waiter's tray.

"There," he said, "that's the lot! An' 'ere, this is for yerself!"

He waved the man away.

"Always believe in lettin' them poor —— 'ave a bit of a tip for themselves—*kumshaw*, eh! All of us wants our *kumshaw*, don't we?" He winked. "Ah, ha! It's *kumshaw* what makes the world go round, not love, ain't it!"

He poured some of the champagne into the plump lady's glass and then passed the bottle to the third engineer.

"Round with it, the way o' the sun! Don't be shy, mister—think o' the twins!"

Each man filled his glass. Each man looked and felt uncomfortable. The bottle reached Freddie Carstow seated on Mr. Mogger's right hand.

"No, thank you!" he said. He set the bottle down in front of the steward.

Mr. Mogger stared at him blankly, as if unable to believe what he had heard.

"What's that?" he said. "You don't want a drink!"

"No, thank you," said Freddie very politely.

"Another —— teeto'ler, eh!" said Mr. Mogger with a curl of his upper lip under the pointed mustache. "What'll it be, then?" Mr. Mogger's dislike of and contempt for teetotalers was notorious on board the *Samarkand*. "What pap have you been drinkin', eh?"

"I've been drinking champagne," said Freddie.

Mr. Mogger had to think to let this answer sink in.

"Oh!" he said slowly. "Oh, indeed! I see. Champagne! If you call it champagne what you 'ad! An' you won't drink any more? 'Ad enough?"

"Not exactly," said Freddie, "but I won't drink any of yours, though!"

Mr. Mogger was growing hot.

"Ho!" he said. "An' why the —— not?"

"Because I don't choose to lower myself by drinking with you, that's why!" said the second engineer.

For an instant he thought that Mr. Mogger was going to hit him. His usually sallow face was flushed a dull-red color; his eyes seemed to have swollen in their sockets. He gasped, as if plunged suddenly into ice-cold water he had lost his breath.

"Why, why—you —— mis'rable twister! You talk to me like that, would you! Why, by ——, you think, do you——"

"That's enough," said Freddie Carstow. "Cut it out! I'm not going to have a row with you for the same reasons I won't have a drink with you!"

Mr. Mogger was speechless. This —— engineer was insulting him to his face. He had refused to drink with him, deliberately! And then had talked about not lowering himself!

"Alf!" said Mrs. Tawes. "Better chuck it!"

" 'E won't drink with me," said Mr. Mogger. " 'E won't drink with me!"

He thrust his head forward and spluttered at the second engineer, words pouring out almost incoherently.

"You sit there, —— you, insult me—no reason—you won't drink wi' me—all right, then, who in —— will yer drink wi', eh?"

"Any one else but you!" said Freddie.

The second mate clutched at his arm.

"Don't, Freddie, for Heaven's sake!"

"Ain't my money good enough?" stormed the steward, his voice getting louder and louder. "Ain't it?"

"Not the way you get it, no!"

Mr. Mogger brought his fist down with a crash on the table.

"——! why, —— an' blast yer, who the —— d'yer think you are!" People at the other tables were standing up and watching the group from the *Samarkand*. " 'Ow do I get it, eh?"

Mrs. Tawes touched the steward timidly on his hand.

"Alf," she said, "do stop it! Every one's starin' so!"

Mr. Mogger, glad to have some one he could swear at without fear of reprisal, turned on her.

"Will you shut yer —— jaw, you slut! D'jer hear me! D'jer want a wipe on the face or what!"

"Mogger," said Freddie, "if you ever talk to a lady like that again, when I'm near, I'll hit you—and if I do hit you, you'll probably die! D'you understand? You're soft and you're flabby, and you're the most despicable little cat I ever met in my life! You'd better apologize to the lady at once and say you're sorry!"

Mrs. Tawes, who looked terrified, gave a little, nervous laugh.

"Oh, that's all right, mister! I'm sure Mr. Mogger didn't mean no harm! Did you, Alf! I wouldn't dream of him apologizin' to me! Wouldn't hear of it!"

Once again she touched Mr. Mogger's hand.

"That's quite all right, Alf, ain't it!"

Mr. Mogger did not speak. He sat and fingered the stem of his champagne glass. He looked as if he were suffocating for want of air. Presently he tugged at the inside of his collar. The flush faded and left his face white and shrunken.

Never before, in all his life, or as far back as it was convenient for him to remember, had he been treated with such open contempt as by the second engineer! The hatred he bore him suddenly became a raging torment in his veins. Carstow—— —— the man!—had humiliated him before the mate and the second mate and the third engineer and Gertie! For what other reason could he have for refusing to drink with him than that he wanted to show him how little he thought of him? The enormity of the insult grew rather than diminished on reflection. A miserable second engineer without either money or prospects of getting money had flouted him!

"Well," said the mate in a kindly way, "no use having a row, is there?"

"No," said Mr. Mogger heavily, "there ain't! But if you think, mister, I'm the man to sit 'ere an' swaller abuse without turnin' a 'air, you're mistaken! Mister—" he nodded toward the second engineer—"I won't forget! I won't! By ——, no!"

Then he stood up.

"You, Gertie, let's go! An', sharp, too! D'jer hear me?"

He leaned forward and snapped his fingers in the second engineer's face.

"You look out for yourself! I ain't a forgivin', psalm-singin' kind o' cuss, neither! If you an' me is enemies, stand from under, that's all! I'll drop on you like a ton of old iron! I'll make you sorry you ever saw me!"

"I'm that already!" said Freddie Carstow. "I'm sick of the sight of you!"

Mr. Mogger stalked out, followed by his lady friend who made energetic but futile efforts to catch up with him.

Freddie grinned.

"Well, that's the end of Mogger!"

"Don't you think it!" said the mate. "You've made a —— bad enemy tonight, my lad!"

"Don't blame you a tuppenny ——, all the same," said the third engineer. "Mogger needs puttin' in his place!"

"You've not borrowed money from him," said the second mate bitterly. "If you had, Freddie, if you had——"

He broke off with a little groan.

"Oh, ——! I dunno——"

Thus the evening ended, after all, in disaster.

V

FREDDIE CARSTOW turned his back on the teeming waterfront of Marseilles and made his way in the direction of Pondicherry Sam's café. He had been kept on board the *Samarkand*, writing letters, and already it was long past the hour when he had promised faithfully he would meet Johnny Sledwood.

He did his utmost to hurry, but the evening was warm and the streets crowded with slowly sauntering groups of men and girls, arm in arm, chattering and laughing and giggling, and it was difficult to make much headway against the slow-moving current of humanity.

He thought of his last visit to Pondicherry Sam's and smiled.

Three days and three nights had passed since the night of the celebration in honor of the twins and in that time Mogger had taken no action. Nothing, at least, had come of the many threats he had uttered with such fire and fury. The probability was, of course, that he had realized that he had no cause of complaint and was holding his hand indefinitely.

Wise Mogger! Freddie Carstow chuckled.

If Mogger had actually attempted to avenge what he evidently regarded as the unforgivable insult, then there might have been hope for him! As it was, the man was a wash-out, good for nothing but cleaning the captain's boots and waiting at table and keeping the best pieces of steak back for his own meals and drinking whisky and lending money at exorbitant rates of interest to poor —— who hadn't enough sense to see what kind of shark he was!

And then Freddie wondered how long the second mate would wait for him at Sam's and stepped quickly off the footpath to make way for a woman in a blue linen coat and skirt who hastened toward him.

"Mr. Carstow!"

She caught hold of his arm.

He drew back, surprized that any woman should know his name and, because he knew the waterfronts of the world, suspicious of danger.

"It's quite all right!" said the woman. "I wanted to speak to you!"

And by the light of a street lamp Freddie recognized Mrs. Tawes, Mogger's lady friend.

"Well!" he said. He did not try to hide his impatience. "I've no time to spare!"

"You needn't think I'm going to make trouble," said the woman with a certain dignity of manner. "I ain't that kind! I've got something to tell you, something important. Understand! *You'll* be the loser if you don't listen, not me, anyway!"

"Well!" he said. "Depends what you mean by important!"

What he had seen of Mrs. Tawes had not impressed him. He distrusted any one who could be a friend of Mogger's.

"You don't believe that I'm on the square, eh! You're wrong, of course. That's because you're young and you're foolish! Trust some one older'n yourself for once, even if she is a woman! I'm in dead earnest. Come over here!"

She led him across the sidewalk toward a little confectioner's shop. At the door he stopped.

"It's no use, Mrs. Tawes," he said, "I've got to make haste! There's one of the crowd waiting for me now."

"A man!" she said. She laughed bitterly. "It would be! Of course! A woman doesn't count, does she!" They stood in the doorway. "Mr. Carstow, I'm trying to do you a good turn but you're suspicious because you saw me the other night with that man, Mogger! I'm not responsible for him, am I? I'm in earnest. Mogger means bad!"

And now the earnestness in the woman's husky voice, the fear in her blue eyes, the lines and wrinkles in her face, under the rouge and the dusting of powder, convinced him against his will that she was trying to be of service. Perhaps it was right that he should listen to what she wanted to say! And after all—a sudden pity for her swept away his scruples—what harm would he be doing, or what risk would he be running, if he did as she asked him?

He pushed open the door of the little shop.

"Better go on in," he said; "you're looking tired!"

They sat at a small table between the counter and a row of shelves laden with glass jars of colored caramels and fondants and highly ornamented boxes of candy.

"Will this do?" asked Freddie Carstow. "What would you like to drink?"

Mrs. Tawes gave a little shrug of her plump shoulders and smoothed the bronze hair from her forehead under the curve of her white straw hat trimmed with blue ribbons.

"Coffee or chocolate, that's about all, I guess! Warm lemonade, maybe, or grenadine—lord! Not for me—and the tea's filth! I'll have chocolate. It's a poor substitute for a real drink, but it can't be helped."

A girl with a mop of fair hair took their order. Mrs. Tawes leaned forward, her elbows on the table.

"Now, listen to me, Freddie—that's your name, ain't it? So silly of me calling you Mr. Carstow, eh! You don't mind, do you? Well, Freddie, I know Mogger better than you do! It's your first voyage. He told me. He told me a lot of things. Freddie, he don't like you! He'll never forgive you for not drinkin' with him. See! That's his way. Touchy! He swore he'd get you somehow, somewhere!"

The second engineer listened with a puzzled feeling that he was taking part in a scene in a motion picture seven-reel thriller—himself, the hero; Mogger, the villain; Mrs. Tawes, the heroine! The thought of Mrs. Tawes as the heroine, her plump, serious face and tragic eyes and her rouge and the floppy straw hat trimmed with blue, and the bronze of her untidy hair, and her blue linen suit made him smile. He was sorry for her, none the less.

Mrs. Tawes was not the kind of woman to inspire any young man with either confidence or respect. In her girlhood she might have been beautiful—all curves and softness and dimples—but now she was merely a tightly-laced woman of middle age engaged in a desperate struggle against increasing weight; handicapped with a double chin and a general effect of bagginess around her jaws, and eyelids that were too prominent and lips that were too slack. Her eyes, blue in color, were her best feature, but she made too much use of them when talking. She could not utter the most innocent remark without either closing her lids for an instant or opening them very wide or peering short-sightedly, almost, through eyelashes heavy with paint.

There was in her faded attractiveness a straining after the lost charms of her youth that made the second engineer distrust her motives. And yet, though she seemed always on the point of breaking out into a series of irritating giggles or of playfully hitting him with her gloves, as she had hit Mr. Mogger three nights earlier, not once in the conversation that followed did she allow her natural inclinations or her coquettishness to cloud the issue of the discussion. She was, woman or not, in deadly earnest.

The fair-haired waitress brought them their chocolate in deep, wide cups and a plate of cream puffs and pastries.

When she had gone Mrs. Tawes went on.

"Mogger's like ——! In his own estimation. Understand! You heard him! The best's none too good, he said! You insulted him. Right! He's going to get you. See! He's going to run you out of the company. How? —— knows! I don't for one. But I tell you, Freddie, if he makes up his mind to do it, he'll do it!"

"A steward!" said Freddie with a little laugh. "Aren't you taking Mogger at his own valuation? Go on, Mrs. Tawes, I'm getting interested!"

"If Alf Mogger made up his mind to make himself captain of that ship of yours, I'd back him to do it! He's dangerous, that man! I'm scared of him. He'll get you run out of the company, sure as fate, unless you stop him! And before that, though, he'll have you marked! Yes, he's a beast all right! A coward, too! I hate him!"

Freddie heard Mrs. Tawes's husky voice in a kind of dream. It came over him suddenly that she was telling the truth. Her sincerity was almost painful.

"You know what Marseilles is, don't you?" she said. "If you don't, you ought to! It's —— upon earth. This—" here Mrs. Tawes waved her arm around in the direction of the noisy, brilliantly lighted street—"this is civilized! But you know well as I do there's part of this burg where——! London's bad, but it's big; Marseilles is worse for its size than any place I ever been in—there's parts of Marseilles where Mogger could find a man who'd out you for five francs! No, I'm not sayin' in so many words he'd go quite as far as that, but he's bad, that man, bad as bad, an' I don't trust him! You understand! That's what I'm warnin' you against!

"Don't you go strolling around Marseilles by yourself, whatever you do! Maybe I've made a fool of myself—I have—maybe I've had my eyes shut—women are fools, I know; you can't tell me anything about 'em I ain't aware of already—but I'm wiser now than I was three days ago! I've learnt a lot! From Mogger, o' course! Come to that, Freddie, there ain't a man I've met who hasn't taught me somethin' queer—from my husband up!"

Her voice had taken on an inflexion that assured the young man that she was digging down into depths of bitterness that frightened her.

"Why are you telling me all this?" he

asked. "I thought Mogger was a friend of yours!"

She looked at him steadily, then lowered her eyes:

"You stood up for me the other night when he swore at me! D'you understand? I'm not so bad, Freddie!. Silly, perhaps! Most women are! My kind, anyway. Lonely, certainly! An' that's how it is! Something happens an' we see where we're headed. I dunno why I fell for that little liar; but I did. He is a liar, too! He lied to me, right an' left. Him an' me were going to be married! He says we weren't. All right! What can I do? Nothin'! Why should I have come out all this way from London, though, if we wasn't going to be married? That's what I did—overland, through Paris, because he wanted my help in a deal he was puttin' through! An' now what do you think? It serves me right for being a fool! He's taken up with another woman—a French girl! He told me last night, Mogger did, that I made him tired!

"What's more—" under the rouge Mrs. Tawes's cheeks were red—"what's more, he said, lookin' at me reminded him of lookin' at an old cab horse! He's no Venus himself, —— knows! with that stomach of his an' them short, bandy legs! But still, if it comes to that, looks an' such-like—Lord! what's the odds! But what a liar, eh?"

Tears balanced on the long, heavily-blacked lashes and splashed on to the cream-bun on her plate.

"Well, Freddie, I'm wiser now than I was before. I've been crazy all this while, o' course, not to have seen through him. The low liar! Play fast an' loose with me, will he! Will he, ——! I've helped him! He's said so again an' again I'm clever! Well, I am clever! Too clever for the likes of him!"

She took a mouthful of cream-bun, drank some chocolate, and resumed:

"I thought he was coolin' off the day we all had that row in Pondicherry Sam's joint. I made inquiries, just to make sure. I'm not so soft as I look, Freddie. D'you see this necklace?"

Mrs. Tawes laid down her fork and unclasped the pearl necklace from around her neck—

"Good, ain't it?"

Freddie examined the pearls with a feeling of awe and nodded his head.

"Lord, yes! Must be worth a small fortune!"

Mrs. Tawes laughed harshly, and then put her hand to her mouth quickly and looked suspiciously toward the counter behind which the fair-haired girl sat reading a newspaper.

"Worth a small fortune, my grandmother's shimmy! It's a fake! Paste! Get me! Artificial! And my Lord Alfred Mogger, M. P., B. F., gave it me as a present eighteen months ago! He told me it was good! I believed him, o' course. I'd have believed him in them days if he'd come to me an' said he was goin' to give me the moon! I tell you, Freddie, I must have been stark mad!

"Two days ago, gettin' the shivers in advance, I went to a gentleman friend of mine who works in a joolry store here an' asked him to value it! He said it was worth about half a sovereign! See! Half a thick 'un! I tell you that just about got my nanny! False! What d'you know about that? I waited till Mogger came ashore.

" 'Alf,' I says, 'this is false!'

"Did he fall at my feet? He did not! No, he took it as calm as you please. He pretended not.

" 'My ——!' he says, 'then I've been swindled out o' my money!'

"Swindled, nothin'! The man what could swindle Alf Mogger ain't been weaned! I hate a liar! Give me a decent pickpocket any day in the week, but a liar, nothing doing!"

"He's bad, of course!" said the second engineer. "I know that all right!"

"Bad!" said Mrs. Tawes. "Bad! He's like a bottle of arsenic in the hands of a tame monkey! You haven't begun to know him yet! Look here!"

She thrust her hand into the bosom of her blouse and produced a small, rolled-up silk handkerchief tied with pink ribbon.

"Do you know what I've got here?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"How could I?"

She undid the string and unfolded the handkerchief and then before his astonished eyes she dangled another necklace of pearls, even more lovely, if not quite so large, as the one she wore clasped around her neck.

"Hold it in your hand!" she said.

He did as she told him.

"Artificial, too!" he said. "Well, they're beauties! As good as the others, quite!"

And then Mrs. Tawes rocked to and fro in her chair in a perfect spasm of mirth until she saw the astonished face of the fair-haired girl staring at her over the glass counter and subsided suddenly into chokings and gurglings.

"Artificial! Why, o' course! That's the scream of it!"

"Did he give them you?"

"Did he give them me! He did not! No, he cert'nly didn't. But I got 'em from him! What's more, he don't know yet where they are! I bet he don't even know that they're gone! But when he does, oh, my Aunt Susan! What'd I give to be there to see!"

Freddie Carstow was puzzled.

"He's going to give these to some one else, or was he?"

Mrs. Tawes did not answer him directly. She regained her gravity, wiped her eyes thoroughly, and dropped her voice to a whisper.

"Now, you listen to me, Freddie. He's got it in for you! He's going to ruin you same as I said. Be careful! Walk in the middle of the road and don't get drawn into no scraps startin' accidental kind of! That's how he's like to get you! See! That's the first piece of advice I got for you. The second is this: He's going to try and run you out of the company. If he shows any signs of actin' ugly, if you think he's framin' anything against you, you go to him and say to him, kind of quiet—

"'*I know what Peter the Greek knows!*'"

"Peter the Greek!" said the second engineer.

"Just that! Peter the Greek! You know what he knows! See what happens! If he don't crawl an' offer you anything in the world he's got so long as you keep your mouth shut, then I'm a goldfish with the pip! See! Peter the Greek, that's the pass-word! Peter the Greek! But don't, whatever you do, say I told you, and don't, if you value your life, Freddie, say a word to any one else but Mogger! That's what you got to remember! Tell Mogger, if you got to, but not another soul!"

Mrs. Tawes slipped the necklace of pearls back into her bosom.

"By the way, did you ever hear how it is Alf Mogger can afford to cut such a dash when he comes ashore, eh?"

"Money-lending, isn't it!"

"Money-lending! Stuff! How much'd he make out o' that? He wouldn't be steward aboard a tramp if that was the best he could do! Busying himself in other people's business, that's his game! Buying and selling! Understand!" Mrs. Tawes winked. "And what does he buy? Eh? Buys cheap and sells dear, or as dear as he can! Stolen goods, o' course! Joolry that's been pinched in England and can't be disposed of at home! See! He's a fence. That's his job. Smuggling things out of the country an' sellin' 'em in a place like this—Marseilles, or Naples, or Genoa—it's all one—Constantinople, Algiers or Alexandria—old Alf knows the rigging. Lord! An' one o' these days he'll be nabbed! Sure as fate! Nabbed! And how?"

Mrs. Tawes's blue eyes were very bright and she smiled in a way that made Freddie Carstow suddenly decide that of the two Alf Mogger was the less dangerous.

"How's he going to be nabbed, eh?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Freddie.

Mrs. Tawes tapped her bosom.

"Through this!" she said. "Do you get me?"

"No," said Freddie, and he had a confused idea that she was trying to indicate a broken heart and was not quite certain of its exact location in her anatomy.

"Them pearls here," she said. "Artificial, eh?"

"Yes," said Freddie, "like the others!"

"Well, they ain't, then!" said Mrs. Tawes in a soft voice. "They ain't! They're real. They're wonderful. They're about the best there is. See! They was pinched in a hotel last month in London! Mogger smuggled 'em out o' Cardiff. I've got 'em. An' he don't know! See! My——! when he finds out!" She laughed silently. "Once upon a time I used to work with a conjurer! A kind of assistant-like! He taught me a lot. Elementary, but useful! That's how I got the pearls. Mogger'll be half out of his mind when he finds they're gone! An' it's through the necklace I'll get him!"

She finished her cup of chocolate.

"An' now I'd better be going!"

She drew on her gloves and rose to her feet.

"Thank you," she said, "for a most pleasant evening." Her voice was ladylike in the extreme. "So enjoyable to have met a real gentleman."

A man and a girl had entered the shop. Freddie knew she was talking for their benefit.

He paid the bill and followed her out into the open air.

"I don't like you to go like this," he said. "Isn't there anything I can do to help you? You want to get home—what about your fare?" He hesitated.

Mrs. Tawes held out her hand, laughing and shaking her head.

"Good-by," she said. "You're not a bad young feller, but—Lord!—whatever'll become of you I don't know! Whenever I see you, Freddie, I think of the green grass growin'! But you'll learn in time, won't you? Glad to have met you! Don't go running no risks whatever you do, will you? An' remember Peter the Greek!"

VI

FREDDIE CARSTOW emerged from the noise and bustle and brilliance of Pondicherry Sam's into the hot darkness of the night. He stood for a while, considering what he should do next. As he had expected he had missed the second mate. His evening had been spoiled, and all through Mrs. Tawes. Now the sooner he was back aboard the *Samarkand* the better.

He turned, then, and began to walk quickly along the quiet street in the direction of the harbor.

And as he walked, his hands deep in his pockets, his pipe in his mouth, his thoughts still ran on what the woman had told him about Mogger. He was not afraid. Mogger might talk, but what could he actually do? Nothing! What harm, anyway? None! He might have the old man and the mate and the second mate safely stowed away in his pocket and eating out of his hand, but did that mean that the owners and the superintendent back in Liverpool were also going to jump when he called? Not likely! And as for Mogger threatening to have him thrashed, or laid out, or sandbagged, that, of course, was simply talk! He did not believe a word of it! —— Mogger, anyhow!

But how the third engineer would yell when he told him!

And then Freddie thought of the second mate and his wife and twins, and the debt to Mogger, and Mogger's laughter, and he wished with sudden venom that it lay within his power to cripple him somehow and bring him down to his right level.

That Mogger was a receiver of stolen goods explained much. He was not surprized now that he had time to consider. That Mogger had managed to evade the law so successfully did not surprize him, either. Mogger was too clever. And yet the look of the man, his smile, his yellowish eyes, his unwholesomeness, his furtive glances, should have been enough for any one to have said without a second's thought that the man was a crook of some kind! And Mogger was content to go to sea as a steward on a tramp like the *Samarkand* and do his work, voyage after voyage, for a steward's pay, and without, seemingly, having any higher ambition than to be a steward all his life!

The more Freddie reflected on the man's strangeness of character and disposition, the greater the interest he felt in the outcome of Mrs. Tawes's revelations. He wondered by what precise method she intended to have her revenge on him. He wondered what Mogger would say or think when he learned of the loss of his pearls. And how had Mrs. Tawes managed to get possession of them without discovery!

And then he thought of the little woman at home, Mrs. Mogger, with her pinched face and her narrow nose and her steel-rimmed spectacles and her adoring look. What would Mrs. Tawes have said if he had told her of Mrs. Mogger?

As a further subject of speculation he asked himself rather cynically why it was that men like Mogger, obvious crooks, greasy, unwholesome men, always had worshipping females trailing after them! Mogger was like some —— old Turk!

The picture of Mogger in a *tarbush* and slippers, lording it over a harem of Gerties, struck him as comic. He laughed out loud.

The street along which he walked was wide and lined on either side by big shops. Few people were about. The waterfront was very near. The night was quiet. Overhead between the tall houses stars shone in the deep blue of the sky. The heat of the day had gone. Freddie drew a deep breath. Thank Heaven! his hot, stuffy little room on board the *Samarkand* would have had a chance to cool off. Perhaps he would sleep in comfort!

His footsteps echoed on the pavement. Trouble was far from his mind. He felt at peace with the world.

And then, as he reached a narrow turning, he heard the noise of men shouting in the distance. He would not have halted had not Carris, the fireman, staggered toward him and grabbed his arm.

"Mr. Carstow, there's a mob hauf killin' Teame roon' thon corner! Come on an' gi'e's a haun'!" The words came in sharp, uneven gasps. "Yin o' thur savages kickit me in the stomach! Teame's gaun daft—ye maun mak' haste!"

It was characteristic of Freddie Carstow that he never hesitated for one moment or considered the risk he might run by plunging into one of Marseilles' dark alleys by himself, or at the best with only a man like Carris to help him.

Even while Carris was blurting out scraps of information and advice and the need for caution, as there was a crowd—"oot fer bluid!"—the second engineer of the *Samarkand* was hurrying toward the clamor of voices. He made his way down the narrow lane between tall tenements for perhaps thirty yards and then passed under a high archway and emerged in a little open, cobbled space which was the place of intersection of two other streets, each of them dark and narrow like the street down which he had just come.

Here, in front of a low dram shop with an arched doorway, there had gathered together in the light of a sizzling arc lamp a crowd of perhaps fifty people, men, with a sprinkling of women, the dregs of the port of Marseilles, French, Italian, Spanish, Arabs, Chinese, Lascars and Portugese. The British element in this meeting of the races was represented by Pug Teame, the fireman, extremely drunk and bleeding from a cut in his face, bareheaded, and leaning against a wall that projected some little way from the main frontage of the dram shop, and affording him an angle in which he was comparatively free from surprize attack on the flanks.

But not, however, from in front.

As Freddie came up, moving more slowly now that he was at the scene of the disturbance, a man suddenly launched himself from the noisy, jostling mob and flew with what seemed incredible speed at Pug Teame. There was a crack, like the noise of two billiard balls striking and the man who had charged lay on the flagstones on the foot-path, groaning.

"Now, then," said Teame, " 'oo's the next? One at a time, or two at a time, it don' make no diffensh me! Come on, you ——, I'm ready—qui' ready! Mebbe I'm drunk! Don' make no diffensh! An' when I'm finish' wi' you, then I'll shettle *you*—y'ol crimp!"

He turned and with his fingers to his broken nose made a gesture of derision at the arched doorway of the dram shop. Freddie, standing at the back of the crowd, peering over their heads, caught a glimpse of a stout, pale-faced woman who chattered angrily in waterfront French and apparently taunted the men for their cowardice and demanded why they didn't go for the police! This much at least Freddie gathered from her outcries. She wanted that —— of an Englishman who had ruined her, killed or knocked on the head; failing that she desired most urgently the police! And—*nom d'un nom!*—where were the pigs?

Wisely enough, considering the neighborhood, no police appeared. Waterfront rows in Marseilles are apt to pursue their natural course, police or no police, without official assistance in quelling them. If at the end there remain on the cobbles an unidentified corpse, so much the worse for the corpse, but so much the better for the rest of the world! One blackguard the less has ceased to exist!

Since Teame had knocked out his last assailant no one had ventured an attack. The stout, pale-faced woman in the doorway of the dram shop still shrieked curses indiscriminately on every one in sight. And then, goaded perhaps to fury by the inaction of the crowd, she hurled a bottle that she held in her hand at the fireman's head.

The bottle missed its mark and broke on the wall and at once there arose a shout of laughter, jeers of derision, hoots and catcalls. And it appeared that although the fireman was the object of the crowd's hostility, the old lady of the dram shop was not popular.

Still hoping that the riot would die down through lack of interest and excitement Freddie Carstow had made no move to go to the rescue of Teame. He was not afraid, exactly, but it seemed foolish to run unnecessary risks. Teame had only to remain quiet in his corner and there would be no further fighting.

ALREADY the original cause of the disturbance, so Freddie decided, must have been forgotten. And yet that there was still some one who objected to the fireman's existence on earth, became clear when he saw a dark-skinned man in a biretta-shaped cap draw a knife from its sheath and launch it at Teame. Like the bottle the knife hit the wall.

Teame uttered a yell of fury that was a signal for an immediate renewal of activity.

Freddie, marking the man who had thrown the knife, elbowed his way toward him through the crowd. He could stand a lot, but when it came to knives, —— it! Why it was jolly well time to do something.

"You," he said, "what the —— did you throw that knife for?"

Before he could say any more a lady who was with the knife-thrower whipped off her high-heeled shoe and hit him in the face. He paid no heed to her—women were like that always, too —— impulsive!—but promptly banged his fist into the dark man's stomach and he staggered back with a scream and was lost in the press of the throng.

The woman spat at Freddie like a cat and a pair of arms encircled his waist from behind his back. Unable to use his fists, he drove his heel with all his force against the shin of the man who held him. There was a bellow of rage and agony and he was free. Some one struck him over the ear with a stick. He sprang forward, hitting out with both fists, certain of his aim.

When the fight was over and he had had time to reflect on all that had taken place, the salient points that stood out in his memory were the evil lamp-lighted faces surging in on him out of the darkness, the dull pain of the blows he took, a kick on the knee-cap, and above all the progress of Pug Teame, the fireman, through the mob.

Teame was undoubtedly drunk, but drunk or sober he was a fighter. He did not cover his face and crouch as he had covered and crouched in the ring at Cardiff, but fought his way through the crowd, erect and upright, his huge mouth parted in a grin and pouring out a stream of cheerful and lurid obscenity, as if drunk, not with liquor, but with the sheer ecstacy of the fight. He was utterly unlike the man who had been beaten so decisively by the red-headed soldier.

Freddie heard his shout:

"All ri', mister, here we are! All a blowin' an' a growin'! Come on, the lot o' yer! Come on, yer ——!"

The crowd that had perforce parted before his onslaught had closed in once more.

The fireman turned and with a series of fierce half-arm blows cleared a space in front of them.

"Now, then!" he shouted. "Where are yer?"

A fat man propelled violently at him by some one unwilling to receive punishment himself met the full force of his fist and collapsed, howling.

"That's good! That's the style! Come along, my lucky lads! One at a time, two at a time, three at a time! All a blowin' an' a growin'! That's the style! Will yer take it 'ome wi' yer or shall I sen' it?"

Apparently nothing would have pleased Pug Teame more than to have been permitted to continue the combat indefinitely, but Freddie Carstow grabbed him by the arm.

"That's enough, Teame! Teame, do you hear what I'm saying? The police 'ull be here in a minute, you ass! Chuck it! Let's clear while there's a chance!"

Protesting vigorously, Freddie dragged him back, away from the little open space, and the crowd, and the dram shop and the white-faced fat woman, toward the little narrow lane down which he had run when Carris had brought him word of the fight.

A stone flung from the darkness whizzed by them and the crash of breaking glass was answered by a howl.

The fireman would have turned and made for the crowd once more, but Freddie was firm.

"Don't be a —— fool, man!" he said.

He hurried him away. Nor did he allow him to stop until they had reached the corner where he had left Carris.

Of Carris himself there was no trace. He had disappeared.

"Well," said Freddie, "that's all right, anyhow!" He drew in his breath. "Gosh! pretty tough while it lasted, wasn't it?"

They were lucky to have escaped so easily, he knew. Nevertheless he was not pleased. His lips were cut and bleeding. He would be extremely lucky if by morning both his eyes were not blacked. His cheek was bruised. The kick on his knee-cap had lamed him.

Teame began to laugh, silently at first and then more loudly, until, overcome by amusement, he swung his body backward and forward and moved his feet up and down in unison, all the while making little hitting motions with his fists as if he still had before him the mass of the crowd and were punishing them.

"Gor!" he spluttered. "Did yer see them! I ain't 'ad such time dunno when! Mish'r, tha's my mark! Free-for-all! Ge'me suffish'ly drunk, put me agaish dozh'n sho an' I'll be worl's shampion!"

He staggered away and leant against the front of a shop, and stared at Freddie with owlish gravity.

"Mish'r Carshtow!" he said. "Ain't it?"

"Well," said Freddie impatiently, "what about it? Teame, I'm going back to the ship, can you look after yourself?"

All at once Teame began to laugh once more, and this time Freddie felt that he was the cause of his amusement. His dark, close-set eyes were screwed into two slits, he held his hands to his sides:

"Oh, ——!" he said. "Mish'r Carshtow—an' we been fightin'!"

Freddie was growing angry.

"Can you or can't you look after yourself?"

"Mish'r," said Teame chuckling, "I'm a terr'ble f'ler when I'm drunk! If theresh no more fi'in,' then I carn' sthan'! 'Elp me back t'ship—elsh mebbe they'll shove me in cuc-clink or shone them touchsh'll kni-knife me! That'd ne'er d-do—reshpeck'ble persh'n—frien' Moggersh!" He roared. "Frien' Moggersh, eh! Oh, lor'!"

And so, against his will, the second engineer of the *Samarkand* found himself at half-past eleven at night in Marseilles in charge of a drunken fireman who at intervals bent himself double and roared with laughter.

As they drew near the waterfront Teame halted.

"—— funny, ain't it?"

"What's funny?" asked Freddie, who was too tired to talk. "Buck up, man! What the ——'s the use of hanging around now! And stop laughing!" He shook him. "—— you, Teame, stop it!"

"If you knew whar I know," said Teame, "you'd be laughin', too! Whar you think? I gorra quid gi'me to-ni' jush' for promish'n' gi' you lickin'! Shee! Ol' —— Mogg'r! Gi'me quid, he did, promish'n' lay you out! Wha's more, if hadn' been for quid, I'd done it, too! Shee! Ri' off, wi'ou' thinkin' twicesh! But y'un'shtan', I got drunk an' cuc-couldn'—shee? Gor drunk on the quid Mogg'r gi'me! An' jush' now you cuc-come an' help me wi' them—— dagoesh! Shee! Bu' for you, mebbe, they'd 'arf kill me, or the pup-police gor me or shomzin'—shee? Bu'for you, mish'r! An' now, ——! Why I wouldn' touch yer! No' for all money in w-worl'!"

And again the unspeakable Teame rocked with laughter.

And then Freddie saw Carris limping toward him, followed by the fo'csle hands of the *Samarkand*, and his ordeal was at an end.

"Hech!" said Carris. "Are ye a' richt, Pug? Efter I wis hurt I gaed fer assistance an' this is a' I can fin'!"

"Tha'sh a' ri'!" said Teame. "Whar goin' do?"

"Whit say we gang beck to whaur ye was fechtin' an' knock oot thur baliguards!"

The second engineer left them arguing at the corner.

MR. MOGGER was feeling ill. He sat on the plush covered settee in his room in the midst of wild disorder, where usually there was neatness, and abandoned himself to panic and despair.

Everything that he possessed on board the *Samarkand* was laid out within his range of vision. He had gone so far as to take out the drawers of his bureau and empty the contents into his bunk and on to newspapers spread out on the floor; his leather suit-case and kit-bag were wide open. The strip of teak-wood at the back of his wash-basin had been unscrewed, revealing the open panel behind which was the hiding-place which not even the cleverest customs officer in the world would have suspected. It would take hours to restore his room to its accustomed neatness. And yet his trouble had been in vain. The worst possible blow had befallen him. His pearls had vanished.

Mr. Mogger rested his elbows on his knees and held his head in his hands.

His pearls had vanished! And what in —— had he done with them! He could scarcely believe it! Once more, half-heartedly, frantic with fear and rage and anxiety, he felt in his waistcoat pockets.

Carelessness he despised. And yet through whose fault was it but his own that the pearls, that would have meant so much money, were missing? Why hadn't he had more sense than to carry them around with him? What was worse, much worse, he could not recall with any certainty when he had last actually seen them with his own eyes! So far as he knew the necklace had not been out of the little leather case in which it was kept, and yet tonight when he had unscrewed the strip of teak-wood and opened the secret panel at the back and taken out the case, the necklace had gone! Some one had robbed him! But who?

And so moved was Mr. Mogger by his loss, so upset and disturbed and ill, that he actually had tears in his eyes.

Mr. Mogger moved in peculiar business circles. He had little hope at all, no hope, in fact, that he would ever again be given the chance of seeing his necklace.

And then he heard footsteps. Stealthy, soft footsteps in the saloon creeping nearer and nearer.

In sudden alarm, his heart thumping unsteadily, he rose to his feet and, very softly, very quickly, he replaced the little panel and the strip of teakwood, slipping the screws into their holes noiselessly, wondering the while who it could be who was creeping around the saloon at half past one in the morning.

The captain was in his room on the lower bridge; the mate was in his room, too; the second mate when he had last seen him was playing cards with the second engineer, the third and the wireless operator in the engineers' mess-room.

He waited in the middle of his room, scarcely daring to breathe.

And then there came a tap at the door. Mechanically he turned down the oil lamp that hung over his bureau in its swivel bracket.

"Who's there?" Mr. Mogger whispered.

"It's me!" said a voice. "Lemme in, quick!"

Mr. Mogger opened the door no more than an inch, but that inch was too much. Two strong hands slid through the gap, grasped the door-post firmly, and though Mr. Mogger pressed his shoulder against the door, it was useless. He was forced back slowly, steadily, until he saw that resistance was useless and he withdrew his weight and stood once more in the middle of the room, glaring at Pug Teame the fireman.

"Well," he said in a low voice, "what is it?"

Teame entered and closed the door after him.

"Mish'r," he said, approaching and bending down, "mish'r, you gimme a quid, didn't yer!"

Mr. Mogger would have recoiled had space permitted. The smell of bad whisky sickened a sensitive stomach, already distressed by the disasters of the evening.

"Well," he said listlessly, "what about it? Did you do as I asked you?"

"Did I?" said the fireman. "Did I, eh?"

He reached out his hand and turned up the lamp.

"——!" said Mr. Mogger.

The fireman's face, never a thing of beauty, was scarred and swollen; his cheeks were smeared with a mass of dried blood; his jacket was torn; he had lost his collar; but his grin was triumphant.

"What 'appened?"

"What happened!" said the fireman. "I'll tell yer! You gi-gimme a quid, didn't yer!"

"What about it?" A weak rage swept over Mr. Mogger. " 'Ere, what right have you got 'ere, eh?"

"What right!" said the fireman in a loud, raucous voice. "What right! Every right! —— you!"

"For 'Eaven's sake, chuck it!" said the steward in an agony of fear. "Some one'll hear you!"

"An' I want 'em to 'ear me!" said the fireman. "You —— mis'rable little louse! Nex' time yer sus-send me off on a erran' like that, I'll break yer neck with me two 'ands, I will! Yer 'ear!"

He thrust his scarred, dirty face very close to Mr. Mogger's and scowled.

"Yer 'ear me! The second engineer's jus' about the besh' young f'ler ever walked, an' you, you mean, whi'-livered little skunk, you oughter be 'ung! Dy'er know wha' I'll do to yer, if ever yer try'n get me do thing like that, eh? Dy'er know! I'll—I'll jus' do thish to yer!"

And to illustrate exactly what it was he had in his mind to do upon some future date, the fireman brought up his right fist with tremendous force, hit Mr. Mogger in the nose and sent him crashing back against the wall of his room. He collapsed on to the settee, whimpering.

Teame looked curiously around the untidy room, clucked his tongue more in sorrow than in anger, kicked aimlessly at a pile of Mr. Mogger's underclothing on the floor, and then saw on the shelf above the washstand a box of cigars and a bottle of whisky.

"Good ni', o' man!" he said. "Good ni'! I'll jush' ta' smoke two, eh, an' bo'l' whisky——"

For a long time after the fireman had gone no sound came from the room but the faint moans of Mr. Mogger.

VII

MR. MOGGER awoke to a sense of injustice.

He had spent the night, thrashing in his bunk, unable to sleep. His pearls had gone. Where? And how? Who could have taken them? He did not know. He did not even know where to begin to search or make inquiries. There was no one he could take into his confidence. It almost seemed to Mr. Mogger that in some mysterious way the second engineer—rot 'im—was responsible! Though he had not even known of the pearls' existence or their presence on board ship, or in the inside pocket of his coat in their little leather case, nevertheless it was through the second engineer that this trouble and all his other troubles had come! Had it not been for him, his mind would have been clear. He would have been thinking more of how to dispose of his pearls and less of how to put a miserable, low-minded, ignorant ship's engineer in his right place!

Mr. Mogger had distrusted engineers always, from the moment he had first set foot on board ship as mess-room lad in his youth. But now they represented, collectively, in the person of the *Samarkand's* second, the dregs of the earth.

When Mr. Mogger rolled out of his bunk early in the morning, the sight of his white face and his swollen, purple nose shocked him beyond measure! Despair swept over him. He climbed back into his bunk again at once and gave himself over to black despondency.

How could he go about his work? How could he appear in public? Then he thought of the many different punishments he could inflict on Teame, the fireman, but broke off to brood once more on how the second engineer had provoked and insulted him! He loathed and despised Teame, but Teame was of no importance! Teame might be strong, but Alf Mogger could at any time he wished smash him! But the second engineer now! He was different, that there Carstow! He needed handlin'!

Mr. Mogger rose late. He was indisposed. A bad accident the night before, coming on board. He gave the pantry-boy full instructions. And if explanations of this nature were to be misunderstood and it was to get about among the officers that he had returned to the ship drunk, then to blazes with the lot of 'em! Why shouldn't he get drunk if he wanted to? And anything was better than to let a pack of ignorant swine find out he'd been punched on the nose by a drunken brute of a fireman!

When Mr. Mogger at last appeared on deck, it was in the middle of the morning and the cargo-men were busy discharging the last of the coal. He had hoped to be able to make his way to the galley for a much needed cup of tea, unobserved, but at the foot of the ladder that led to the lower bridge he saw the second mate and the second engineer, talking. Mr. Mogger was annoyed. Why the —— wasn't that —— engineer down in the engine-room, working! He passed without speaking.

As he reached the No. 3 hatch a low laugh reached his ears. Hot hate surged within him. Some one called him by name.

"Mogger!"

He glanced round over his shoulder. The second mate had disappeared. The second engineer was following him.

Mr. Mogger did not attempt to slacken his speed. He scowled and walked on.

"Mogger," said Freddie Carstow sharply, "I want to speak to you!"

There was a harshness in his voice that made Mr. Mogger, however reluctant, hesitate and then stop.

"What do yer want?" he asked.

"I want to talk to you."

"I'm busy!"

"That doesn't matter! You come along with me!"

And all at once Mr. Mogger knew that it would be useless to resist or argue. He was helpless.

He did not say another word, either of expostulation or anger, until he was seated in the engineer's mess-room on the port side of the alley way that led from the bridge-deck to the engine-room gratings. When, however, he saw that the second engineer was locking the door he burst out in wild fury.

"What the —— do yer think you're playin' at, eh? 'Ere, what is it?"

Freddie Carstow stood with his back to the door and looked at him with such grim menace in his eyes that Mr. Mogger began to whine.

"Yer know, mister, I ain't feelin' myself his mornin'. I 'ad a bad fall last night——"

"I know all about that," said Freddie. "But it's not good enough. Maybe, if you try, you'll find some one to believe it, I won't. You see, Mogger, I happen to know!"

Mr. Mogger moistened his lips.

"Cut ahead with it, then, mister, I want to get on with my work!"

And all of a sudden Freddie Carstow's manner changed from one of easy scorn to fierce anger.

"Mogger," he said, "what did you mean by bribing that fireman, Teame, to lay me out! No, don't try any of your —— lies with me!" Mr. Mogger had begun an indignant denial by calling upon his Creator to witness his innocence. "You did! I know you did! If you want to speak, speak the truth!"

Mr. Mogger made a supreme, but unsuccessful effort, to recover his lost dignity.

"What do yer think you're yappin' about!" he demanded. "I've seen your kind sweeping the gutters before now, I 'ave! I've give you warnin' before, now I mean action! You're for it, Carstow, understand! I'll run yer out o' this —— firm so quick you won't know what's struck yer!"

Carstow, smiling unpleasantly, reached out across the mess-room table and gripped Mr. Mogger by a fold of slack skin under his ear and held him.

"You little worm!" he said. "Who do you think I am, eh? Answer!"

" 'Ow the —— should I know!" said Mr. Mogger. "Leggo my jaw, d'jer 'ear, or I'll give yer somethin' that'll make yer!"

But though the words he used were brave, his face had turned the color of dirty sailcloth and beads of sweat trickled down his swollen, purple nose.

Freddie Carstow was no longer smiling.

"Mogger," he said in a whisper, "let me tell you this, there isn't a —— thing that Peter the Greek knows about you that I don't know! Understand! *What Peter the Greek knows I know!*"

For a moment Freddie thought that the steward was going to faint. He looked ghastly. His muddy, bloodshot eyes opened wider and wider, his lips stretched in a grin of terror, he tore himself loose from the grip on his fleshy jaw and crouched in the corner as far away from the second engineer as possible, his hands to his throat.

"Wha's that?" he whispered. "Wha's 'at you say, mister?"

Any doubts that Freddie might have had of the adequacy of Gertie Tawes's advice vanished in the presence of Mr. Mogger's collapse.

"Well," he said, "and so you know what I mean, eh! I know what Peter the Greek knows!" Freddie allowed his imagination to soar. "Matter of fact, Mogger, I know a bit *more* than he knows! D'jer get me? Your brain gone wrong this morning, or what?"

The steward spoke under his breath in a tone that was almost inaudible.

"Who are yer?" he muttered. "Who are yer?"

"That's telling!" said the second engineer. "I know you, Mogger, but you don't know me! I know what you are! I know how you make your money! You're a crook and a blackguard and before I've done with you, you'll be sorry you ever set foot on the same ship! For I tell you, Mogger, there's enough against you to keep you in clink the rest of your —— life!"

For a long time there was no sound in the little room. The second engineer still stood with his back to the door, staring at Mogger, who sat in his corner, huddled up, the embodiment of helplessness and fear.

He raised his eyes, and Freddie had a fleeting impression of a trapped weasel about to fight for its life.

"Got anything to say for yourself?"

"Nothin', mister!" said the steward. "Nothin'!"

His mind was refusing to function. He could only sit and wait for what the second engineer chose to do for him. —— him!

Minutes passed. Mr. Mogger made no movement. He seemed so stunned by circumstances that any form of initiative was impossible. Never handsome, never even tolerably prepossessing in his appearance, he now looked, as it were, stale and unwholesome and sour.

Presently he stirred. He unclasped his hands and straightened his back and uttered a little sigh that seemed half a yawn. And then he rose to his feet, shakily, like an old man and stood between the wall and the table, with his head bent, frowning.

"All right!" said Freddie. "Now you'd better clear out, back to where you belong! But you know what I know, don't you! And you remember this, Mogger: If you give me any trouble from now on, I'll have you in clink sure as fate!"

He was about to unlock the door when the steward stopped him.

"One moment, mister! 'Ere!"

Mr. Mogger, though still limp, was feeling more himself. He wasn't the man to give in without a fight, the second engineer needn't think it! Too old a hand, he was! Mr. Mogger's mind was working at last. What would he have done in the second engineer's place? The answer was obvious.

"Mister," he said sullenly, "let's talk sense!" He closed one horrible eye slowly. "I'm a rich man, mister. Richer'n you think! I want to know 'ow you found out about Peter the Greek! 'E's a friend o' mine, he is, an' he wouldn't like it if—if it was known them pearls was lost!" His manner changed. He began to whine once more. "For ——'s sake, mister, what have you done with 'em?"

Freddie scowled at him.

"Done with what! I haven't got your —— pearls, Mogger! You're wasting your time! Get out of here, sharp!"

"Mister, we got to talk!"

Mr. Mogger was trembling with excitement. What was happening was all in the game, he knew. The next move was with him. He had in his hand a leather wallet which he opened with clumsy fingers.

"Now, mister, listen to me! I wanter 'elp yer! You wanter help me! 'Ere's somethin' that mebbe will 'elp you forget things you don't need to remember an' remember, mebbe, things you think you've forgot!"

Mr. Mogger thrust a small wad of notes into Freddie Carstow's hand.

"There!" he said soothingly. "There, now we won't say no more about Peter the Greek, nor nothin'! There's twenty-five quid there, mister! For you!"

For a moment Freddie Carstow had not understood the steward's intention or meaning. He gazed at the notes. And then he realized that Mogger was trying to bribe him.

"What's that!" he said. "Twenty-five pounds! Why, you —— little louse!"

He seized him by the right wrist, forced open the hand and planked the notes into his outstretched palm.

"What the —— do you think I am, eh?"

"What are you?" snarled the steward. "A —— fool! Act sensible! Take the money an' stow it! I know the game as well as yerself!"

Freddie, smiling a tight-lipped smile, unlocked the door, swung Mr. Mogger about, grabbed him by the collar and the seat of his trousers and ran him out of the mess-room into the alley-way and through the alley-way out on to the bridge deck. He finished up with a kick, square with the sole of his foot, that drove him head-first, sprawling, against the rail.

"If you don't end up in prison after this, Mogger, it won't be my fault! Understand!"

Ignoring the amazed curiosity of the French cargo-men, he stood for a moment watching Mr. Mogger slowly and painfully rising to his feet. Then he turned and went below to the engine-room.

It took as a rule a good deal to arouse Freddie Carstow to anger, but when roused he was not easily appeased. A wild rage gripped him when he thought of what Mogger had tried to do. Mogger, that —— lousy little rat!—had tried to bribe him!

Freddie Carstow wished that he could put his threats into force! But what could he do? Nothing! What power had he over Mogger, but the power of bluff? None at all! Supposing—just supposing that he was asked what he knew against Mogger! What should he say? He knew no more about Peter the Greek than what Mrs. Tawes had hinted and what he had seen reflected in Mogger's bloodshot eyes. He might pretend, he might threaten Mogger till he was black in the face, but if Mogger chose to ignore his bluff and demand a showdown, he was helpless.

That Mogger had bribed Teame to lay him out was, no doubt, true. What of that! As likely as not Teame would turn nasty and say he knew nothing about it! What, then!

Freddie reflected and came to no satisfactory conclusion. One comfort he had, however, and that was the knowledge that Mogger would trouble him no more.

Mogger was broken beyond all his expectations.

VIII

WHEN the *S. S. Samarkand* put out to sea next day, homeward bound in ballast, Mr. Mogger was, it was noticed, a changed being.

He was no longer sure of himself and his high position. He was no longer patronizing in his attitude toward the officers, no longer overbearing in his conversation. He was forlorn, crushed, dispirited. This, at least, was the general and amazed opinion on board the ship.

Mogger's collapse fitted in with Freddie Carstow's theory that he had smashed him. When they chanced to meet on deck, which was seldom, there glowed in the steward's bloodshot eyes a sullen resentment which was, apparently, the outward sign of his inward fear. Freddie smiled to himself. Mogger would have ruined him, had he had the chance, cheerfully, willingly, and he had rendered him powerless.

But Freddie Carstow was wrong. He did not understand that Mr. Mogger's terror was too great to permit him to remain inactive. He was thinking hard, planning desperate measures, frantic with the thought of what might happen to him. Mr. Mogger, a coward at heart, was most dangerous now that disaster seemed inevitable.

Carstow, if he chose—so Mr. Mogger reasoned—could put him away. Mr. Mogger would break into a cold perspiration as he pictured himself in prison. ——! What'd he do if it come to that? He'd die, prob'ly! They'd be clever, though, if they got him! He wasn't done yet, he wasn't! He could fight still! Ah! that he could! He knew too much, he did! Alf Mogger—poor old Alf Mogger—he wasn't one to be thrown aside like an old sweat-rag! Alf Mogger had power! Ah! and what's more, he knew 'ow to use it!

It was, perhaps, the thought of prison more than anything else, the terror that the second engineer's last threat had inspired, that made his mind turn to the damage he could do others. If he went to prison now—and Mr. Mogger knew only too well how possible this was—if he couldn't manage to wriggle clear, then, by ——! he would make them others, them there stuck-up officers, pay for it, he would!

There was the old man, f'rinstance! He could get *him* all right for taking bribes—rebates, he called 'em—from shippers! *Kumshaw*, that was tacked on to the bills an' paid in the end by the owners! And then there was that there little matter of contraband, voyage after voyage. Ah! Smuggling right under the noses of the customs! And money pouring in! He might think hisself clever, the old man might, but he wasn't as clever as Alf Mogger, his steward, not by a mile!

And the mate! What had *he* done? He'd done a plenty, the mate had. Even in his extremity Mr. Mogger could still smile at the thought of the mate trying to add to his miserable pay, because of his wife and kids—more fool him for havin' em!—and getting himself tied up in trouble! He'd got Mr. Kesham just where he wanted him! The poor fish!

And the second mate! Ah! Mr. Mogger's mind was very active. The second mate now! What about *'im!* Conceited little stuck-up ass, he was! He'd have him just like he'd have the old man and the mate! ——! What a mess! What a 'oly show it would be! The old man, the mate and the second mate! The old man 'ud probab'ly get slung into clink, the same as 'im! The others! Well, they'd lose their jobs to a cert, of course! An' serve 'em right! That second mate now, why the —— hadn't he paid the money 'e'd borrowed? He'd wanted it bad enough at the time, 'adn't he? An' why?

Mr. Mogger gave himself up to speculation.

Why had that there —— little second mate wanted noney so bad he'd agreed to pay the int'rest he asked without makin' a fuss, same as most of 'em did, an' beatin' him down a trifle? *Why was it?* Why, because 'e was scared, *o' course!* That was it! An' what of? Scared of people knowin' why he wanted the money, o' course! What else? Well, then—and here Mr. Mogger had what he considered the idea of a lifetime—he would go straight to the second mate and tell him he must have his money at once, and that he knew why he had borrowed it, and that if 'e didn't pay him 'e'd expose 'im! Mr. Mogger—this was in the middle of the night— rolled in his blankets in an ecstasy of enjoyment and for a moment forgot the fears that oppressed him. But, for a moment, only.

Perhaps if he did all this, perhaps if he showed them others 'ow much he knew, an' what power he 'ad, perhaps they'd be sorry! Perhaps they might even use their influence—if they 'ad any with the —— —to ask the second engineer to 'old his 'and just two days, say! No more! Two days would give him all the time he wanted to get together his money an' sling 'is hook! 'E'd have left the ship at Marseilles, only where was the good? That there blinkin' second engineer would have sicked the police on to 'im!

And Marseilles wasn't quite as 'ealthy a place as it 'ad been! Too many people askin' questions!

But o' course—Mr. Mogger as a rule was not a quick thinker, but now he could scarcely keep pace with his thoughts—o' course, before that come about; before he asked the old man an' the mates, workin' separate, none o' them knowin' about the others, to get that there second engineer to 'old his 'and—he himself, Alf Mogger, would have to tackle 'im once more! He'd go to him two, three days, before the end of the voyage an' ask him what 'e intended to do, he'd have to make sure 'e wasn't to be bought off before he give hisself away to any one else! In Mr. Mogger's opinion, no man was so honest he couldn't be bribed, if the figure was raised sufficiently 'igh!

The first of the three victims that the *Samarkand's* steward chose to intimidate was the second mate. Mr. Mogger went to his room one night soon after he had come off the bridge and told him abruptly he wanted his money. The second mate replied that he hadn't a cent to his name. He'd pay him in time, of course, every penny, Mogger quite understood that, didn't he? But at present he was hard up.

And then Mr. Mogger, irritated by the second mate's helplessness, let fly. He said sharply he wasn't there to listen to no excuses that time o' night, but he knew exactly 'ow it was the second mate 'ad needed the money an' as soon as they reached 'ome intended to expose 'im!

"You know 'oo to!" he said.

The effect was gratifying in the extreme. Mr. Sledwood went white and begged for mercy. He would do his best to scrape up the money somehow, he said, but he wanted another chance. Mr. Mogger was firm. He'd given him chances enough: Unless he had his money the day they were paid off at Cardiff, then he'd not only report him to the owners an' lose 'im his job, but he'd inform, "you know 'oo!" why he had borrowed the money.

He went out of the room, leaving the second mate seated on his settee, his head in his hands.

Much to Mr. Mogger's disappointment, however, the other interviews had less satisfactory results. True, as he recollected afterward, the old man had been rattled—bad. Any one could have seen that much with 'arf an eye. Bowled off his legs, 'e was. But he give fight he did, an' 'e'd have to be managed tactful! Said if it come to telling things about each other, 'e wasn't goin' to sit still an' do nothin' but listen! There was things he could tell, too! He knew more than enough to be gettin' on with, anyway!

Thinking things over, Mr. Mogger had not cared for the tone of his voice. It sounded too positive, too assured, too easy. But he'd merely said, dignified like, he'd heard prison wasn't as nice inside as out, and the old man had come back at 'im, quick.

"You'll have a chance of finding that out for yourself, Mogger, before you're very much older!"

Bluff, o' course, as Mr. Mogger knew. He withdrew, on being asked, not knowing quite what the old man meant when he remarked he'd been expecting heavy weather for some time and he'd made his plans.

The interview with the mate was even less satisfactory. For though the captain had been staggered, as Mr. Mogger had been quick to observe, the mate had merely laughed in his face and told him to get to —— out of it, —— quick. Mr. Mogger had not stopped to argue, but before closing the door he had pointed out that Mr. Kesham would be glad enough to take a second mate's job before the Autumn unless he was prepared to talk sense. Mr. Kesham had retorted by throwing a boot at him.

Dazed by the result of these two interviews, Mr. Mogger allowed some days to pass before taking further action. His fears grew. He lost hope. He could not understand, for one thing, what the old man intended to do. True, he had not referred to their talk again, and his manner toward him was as mild and apologetic as ever. But this, Mr. Mogger felt, might be only a cloak! And even if the old man had been really scared and what he had said about making his plans and things had been only pretense, suppose that Carstow— —— him!—went to him and told him about Peter the Greek! Depression swept over Mr. Mogger in a wave. He knew that all the influence in the world couldn't help him if Carstow couldn't be got to see reason!

——! Poor old Alf Mogger would go to jail! Alf Mogger, 'oo 'adn't done no one no 'arm! Alf, 'oo wanted his just rights, that was all! And the pearls—where in Kingdom Come was them —— pearls! Carstow knew! Perhaps, even, Carstow 'ad them hisself! More impossible things was possible. Whisky was making anything seem possible to Mr. Mogger, who had given himself over to hard drinking as an aid to clear thinking and was feeling the benefit.

All he could do, then—so he argued, muzzily, in spite of the aid to thought—was to assert himself. That was the goods! Assert hisself! It wouldn't do to trust to the old man—rot 'im!—or the mate helpin'! 'E must 'elp hisself! Well, he would! Carstow 'ad been meddlin' with what didn't concern him. He'd find, —— quick, after Alf Mogger got busy, that he'd burnt 'is fingers! Why, ——, Alf Mogger had eaten better men than that there Carstow before 'is breakfast; ah! an' eaten 'is bacon an' eggs after with a happetite!

It was on a Sunday evening when the *Samarkand* was buffetting her way through the Bay of Biscay, rolling sluggishly, being light, with a westerly breeze on her beam, that Mr. Mogger finally drank himself into the right state of mind to feel able to tackle the second engineer.

And in order to prove to himself he was in form he went to the second mate and threatened him once again with exposure unless every penny he owed him was paid by the end of the voyage. The second mate's despair, his terror, his appeal for mercy, all were very pleasing to Mr. Mogger. Less pleasing was the second mate's sudden spurt of temper that culminated in Mr. Mogger being hustled out of the room and the door slammed in his face. Mr. Mogger, indeed, was rather shaken. He needed a couple of stiff drinks of whisky before he recovered his self-control.

◆

FREDDIE CARSTOW was alone in the engine-room. The rolling of the ship had increased since he had come on watch at four P.M. It must, he felt, be blowing up for a gale. He stood on the slippery platform by the telegraph, swaying to and fro easily. It was now half-past six—he glanced at the big clock on the bulkhead—and at last—to his amazement—he had reached a period when it seemed he could rest for a few minutes without worrying. Yet what was more certain in an engine-room than that at any instant something might smash or carry adrift! And why should you expect anything else in a firm where the engineers did their own oiling? Freddie smiled to himself and then sighed—why sell your farm and go to sea?—and hoped that nothing would go wrong before the donkeyman came down to relieve him at eight bells for the chief's watch.

Everything was running smoothly; the noise that came to his ears blended into a rhythmical harmony; almost he could fit a little tune of his own composing to it; the plunging cranks whirling round and round into their pits and out again, the feed pumps, the circulation pumps, the forced-draught fan whirring away, the drone of the dynamo, the little hiss and stutter of steam; he had no need to worry; everything was running smoothly and sweetly. The bearings were cool; gauges, water, combustion, condenser, all were perfect.

He balanced himself to the roll of the vessel, meeting the full force of the North Atlantic on her beam and lighted a cigaret. And then he heard what he thought was a sudden knocking somewhere and tried to locate the sound and failed. Knockings meant trouble, sure as fate! Now where was that coming from? And then the knocking stopped as suddenly as it had begun.

Queer, that! He could have sworn that he heard something! And yet there was nothing! Perhaps it was no more than fancy!

He heard the knocking once more. But now it was no longer a knocking but the stumble of clumsy footsteps, descending the ladder from the gratings.

He glanced upward sharply, cigaret in hand, and saw the dark bulk of a man peering down at him.

"Who's that?" he called.

There was no answer. He waited a moment, puzzled. Then, feeling irritated, knowing that this was not one of the engineers, he climbed the ladder to the middle grating and there found Mogger, clinging to the hand-rail, glaring at him.

"Mister, I want to speak to you!"

Mogger was drunk, of course. When since leaving Marseilles had Mogger been thoroughly sober—police-station sober, anyway! The old man's weakness in allowing his steward to stagger around, reeking of whisky, sleeping at odd hours of the day, neglecting his work, had been a general topic of conversation. The reason, however, was clear. What could the old man do against Mogger? Mogger was top-dog now and for all time! Mogger could do as he liked! But not in the engine-room! By gum, not in the engine-room, the blasted flunkey!

"What do you want here?" demanded Freddie.

"'Ere," said Mogger, shaking his head defiantly, "what ri' you gor talkin' me li' that, eh? Gem'an, me! Un'stan'!"

Freddie Carstow glared at the wretched object before him. All kinds of stories had been going the rounds about Mogger: He was leaving the sea; planning to settle down in the country and live like a gentleman on his savings! A gentleman! And here he was now, on the middle gratings, drunk, his eyes red, his lids purple, his nose still swollen, his face a ghastly drab gray in the electric light, the ends of his dark mustache for once unwaxed hanging limply from the corners of his mouth, bareheaded, his hair damp like mice-tails on his forehead.

"Mish'r," he said, "I gor bone pick wi' you!"

"Better get up that ladder, Mogger, quick as you —— well can! Jump to it!"

Mr. Mogger stared at him with glassy eyes.

"You talkin' me?" he observed. "I won' gerrup no —— larrer! Shee! No, 'fore you 'n' me come to un'shtan'in'!" He hesitated. "Now, mish'r, how mush you take nodder do wha' you shaid! Eh? Lash' time I off'd twen-fi' poun'! Now, lish'n 'ere—wha'bout fif'y? Shee! Fif'y poun' you don' shay word 'bou' you know wha'!"

"Here, Mogger, I've no time to spare. I told you to get up that ladder! Did you hear?"

"Now, mish'r, you shaid qui' 'nuff—qui' 'nuff!" Mr. Mogger thrust his right hand into his trouser-pocket and groped for money, so Freddie Carstow thought, but he was mistaken. Mr. Mogger produced a weapon which he invariably carried as a means of self-defense in case of trouble—an old-fashioned razor. This he opened quickly. When he saw the thin, wicked-looking blade, Freddie drew back a pace on the gratings, so as to have a chance of watching the steward more clearly in case he sprang without warning.

"What the —— do you think you're doing with that razor?" he said sharply.

He was not exactly afraid, but Mogger was drunk and with the razor in his hand his reach was long, so that a man his own size, with only his fists for weapons, had small chance of catching him unawares without being slashed somewhere.

"I'm do'n' wi' thish razh'r," said Mogger, "jush' wha' I wanter!"

"I'll give you the biggest thrashing you ever had in your life, Mogger, if you don't get up that ladder this minute!"

Mr. Mogger continued speaking in his thick, drunken voice.

"Mish'r, how mush you take nodder talk, eh? Fif'y quid nodder shay nothin'——"

"Put that razor away, Mogger! You're no more than a rotten little crook!"

"Ho, am I!" said Mr. Mogger.

The sudden flare of viciousness in the red eyes was all the warning Freddie Carstow had. He stepped to one side swiftly, pressing himself against the hand-rail, perilously near the flashing steel rods, rising and falling. Mr. Mogger flung himself forward and slashed horizontally at arm's length in a sweeping semi-circle with his razor.

He missed his stroke and Freddie sent his right fist crashing with all his force against the steward's jaw. For an instant the steward stood, the razor still clenched in his hand, swaying drunkenly on the grating, a look of horror in his face. And then, as the ship rolled over to starboard, Mr. Mogger no longer holding on to the hand-rail, overbalanced and with a screech of terror dropped headlong from the middle grating on to the steel platform beneath.

Freddie Carstow, the fierce thudding of his heart louder than the steady thudding of the cranks that drove the ship through the heavy sea, stared down at the crumpled, twisted body.

A feeling of nausea swept over him.

He had killed Mogger—in self-defense, of course—none the less he had killed him! That was all he could think of! He had killed Mogger!

Then, throwing off his stupor, fighting against the numbing paralysis of guilt, though he knew there was no guilt, he slid down the ladder and dropped on his knees by the steward's side.

"Mogger!"

He shook him gently. There was a wound in Mogger's head; a stream of blood trickled from under the dark hair down the forehead on to the oily steel plate. His left arm was broken between elbow and wrist, but he was not dead.

There came a faint groan:

"Oh, Gord! Gord!"

A swirl of relief made Freddie Carstow feel strangely limp and ineffective. Mogger was alive, after all! He had not killed him! He was glad. And then, strangely enough, he was sorry that any man, so base, so vile, could still live!

He rose to his feet. At first he found it difficult to collect his thoughts and think coherently.

What must he do? Tell some one, of course! Tell every one on board! Mogger, drunk or sober, had tried to murder him! What an unmitigated swine the man was! He had tried to murder him! With a razor!

And why? What for? The man was crazy! All the same, murderer or not, that arm of his ought to be set! Nor could he be let die where he was!

He would have to report the whole thing at once and—Freddie frowned impatiently. —— Mogger! How could he leave the engine-room!

Then he shuddered. ——! He might have been lying there, himself, at that minute, where Mogger himself lay, but dead, killed by the razor!

And then he turned swiftly and saw Pug Teame, the big fireman, staring at him from the entrance to the stokehold between the boilers.

"Here, Teame!"

He beckoned.

Teame came slowly into the engine-room.

"——!" he said. "The stooard 'ad a fall, sir?"

A curious interest in the big fireman's close-set eyes made Freddie wince. All of a sudden he became strangely calm, strangely cautious. He had been going to say what had happened—now he hesitated. After all, why should he tell Teame. Teame was dangerous. He didn't trust him. Never had, since the night of the fight at Marseilles. Teame knew too much! Better wait! Better by far, go to the old man and tell him! Or the chief! But, Teame, now—what would Teame say or think if he knew the truth?

"Teame," he said sharply, "did you see Mogger fall?"

"No, sir," said Teame. "Just come in this second, sir, to ask the time! Queer 'im goin' down like that, wasn't it! Wonder what come to 'im!"

Funnily enough it was the thought of little Mrs. Mogger with the pinched face and the thin nose and the steel-rimmed spectacles and her adoration for her Alfie that made Freddie Carstow decide finally to say nothing to Teame. Though why, exactly, he did not know! Sooner or later, the whole ship would learn how Mogger had tried to murder him. Teame would know, then, anyway!

"Teame," he said, "we'll have to get him away from here at once. Go and find the cook and the donkeyman and tell them I want to see them!"

IX

AT EIGHT P.M., Freddie Carstow was relieved by the donkeyman, who, there being on board the *Samarkand* no fourth engineer, stood the chief's watch. Freddie, feeling rather like a man who has just recovered from a bad illness and is out of bed for the first time, climbed the long ladders that led to the gratings, slowly and wearily. He still could not get it out of his mind that since he went on watch four hours earlier he had missed death by the merest fraction of an inch, and that but for some miracle he would have been responsible for killing Mogger. He felt shaken and bewildered, and curiously very sleepy.

The chief's door was open. Freddie knocked.

"That you, mister?" said the chief's voice. "Come in!"

Freddie entered the room and to his surprize found the chief engineer lying on his settee, his face swollen and pale and tied up in a red woolen muffler.

"I ha'e the neuralgy bad," he said. "I'm hauf crazy wi' it!"

"Did you hear about Mogger?" said Freddie.

The chief nodded.

"Aye. Drunk, o' course, an' fell aff the middle gratin'! Serve him richt, tae, if he'd been killt! Nae business in the engine-room, onywey!" He gave a little sigh. "——! it's gi'in' me gyp! Wis there onythin' ye wantit, mister?"

"I only thought I'd tell you how Mogger came to fall, chief!"

"This pain disna gi'e me muckle peace the nicht! I'll ha'e to hear whit happened the morn's morn'!"

"Hadn't you better turn in, chief?" Freddie asked.

"I canna!"

"I'll be responsible for the watch, chief, if that'd be any help!"

"Away you to yer bed, man! Ye're no' lukin' ower gran', yersel'!"

"Good night, chief!"

"Guid nicht, mister!"

Freddie went to his own room, undressed and climbed into his bunk. He was dog-tired and would sleep soundly. But from the moment his head touched the pillow he was wide awake. The night was hot and he was restless and uneasy. His mind was full of thoughts of Mogger and his attempt to kill him, the punishment he deserved, Teame's smile, Mrs. Mogger, the excitement and interest and talk of the hands as Mogger, unconscious once more, was carried out of the engine-room, the chief's neuralgia, the pearls, Gertie Tawes at Marseilles, and Peter the Greek!

He reached for a book and tried to read, but the printed words made no sense. He wanted to smoke, but had neither tobacco nor cigarets; his pouch he had left in the second mate's room early in the afternoon. At half-past eleven, tired of tossing and turning restlessly, he climbed out of his bunk, slipped on his trousers, a jacket and a pair of shoes and went on deck for a breath of fresh air.

The *Samarkand* was rolling heavily, the wind was freshening, but the sky was still clear. Freddie leaned over the rails amidships for a while gazing southward. The moonlight on the waves, the white curling foam, the faint stars; the splash of the water against the hull, the noise of the cranks; the salt tang in the air, all combined to soothe him and rest him. Presently, feeling that perhaps if he had a smoke he might sleep, he made his way toward the saloon. It was nearly one bell. The second mate's watch was from midnight to four A.M. He would go to his room and ask for his pouch.

He knocked at the door. Johnny Sledwood's voice told him to come in. He opened the door and stopped, as surprized as when nearly four hours earlier he had seen the chief with his head tied up in a red muffler.

Johnny Sledwood, an expression of utter despair in his boyish face, his eyes tragic, sat on his settee, half-dressed, in shirt and trousers and socks.

"Whatever's the matter?" said Freddie.

"Hullo, Freddie, what's brought you here, eh?" The second mate tried to smile and failed dismally.

"Just looking for my tobacco-pouch. Couldn't sleep! What's been happening?" And then, seeing that for some unknown, incomprehensible reason, Johnny Sledwood was finding it difficult, if not impossible, to speak, he went on quickly: "Lord! I've had a night of it! First one thing, then another! I suppose you heard about that —— fool, Mogger! Came down to the engine-room, drunk as a lord, and fell slap off the middle grating on to the platform! Broke his arm and cut his head to pieces, but that's all! Tough nut, isn't he?"

Johnny had straightened his back and was staring at Freddie with grim despair.

"I heard," he said. "I saw him. Yes, Freddie, he's tough all right! I suppose any one else'd have been killed! He's getting on quite well, I believe! By tomorrow or the day after, he'll be up and around the same as usual!"

Johnny uttered a hard little sound in his throat which was, so Carstow decided with sudden alarm, more a sob than a laugh.

"When I came off watch," he continued, "I was told he was dead! *Dead*, do you understand, Freddie? But he's not dead! ——, no! He's more alive than most of us—what's a broken arm to a man like that? Will that stop him? ——, no!"

"What's wrong, Johnny?" said Freddie. "If there's anything I can do to help you——"

He ended abruptly.

"Freddie," said the second mate, "I'm for it! There's no escape! What am I to do? Oh, my God, Freddie, it's hard!"

"Mogger?" asked Freddie.

Johnny Sledwood bowed his head.

"Mogger," he said slowly. "Yes, it's Mogger!"

"Is it money you're worrying about? The money you owe him?"

"Yes. Freddie, he came here tonight before I went on watch, half-drunk, of course. He told me if I didn't pay him at once, he'd have to go to the owners and tell them I'd borrowed money on false pretenses! If he does—if he does, Freddie—how long would I hold my job? Where could I get another, eh? With that hanging around my neck! The second mate borrowing money from the steward and not paying him back!"

He drove his right fist into the cupped palm of his left hand.

"But I have paid it back! By ——! Freddie, I've paid that —— shark back his blasted money, with interest as well, and I still owe him the principal!"

"Don't get you!" said Freddie with a frown. "If you've paid the little skunk, you've paid him!"

There was a tap at the door and one of the deck-hands looked into the room.

"One bell, sir!" he said.

"All right, Jones!" said the second mate. "Thank you!"

The man closed the door softly and he went on:

"Ever borrowed money from Mogger, Freddie? You've not, of course, or you'd know what it is to pay int'rest monthly and not yearly! See! That's how he gets you! Seven per cent. per month! Work that out and see what it comes to a year!"

"But, good lord! that's not legal!"

"A —— lot he minds! Can I go to law? No, I can't, and he knows it, too!"

Freddie Carstow did not speak for some time. The second mate put on his boots.

"If it's not a rude question, Johnny, how much do you still owe him?"

"Hundred and twenty pounds!"

Freddie whistled.

"You see now, don't you?" said the second mate. "My ——! Freddie, when I think what I've done—I could cry!"

"What made you go to Mogger?"

"I had to. Mogger was the only man in the world I knew who'd lend me money without security! What else could I do? Freddie, I'm half out of my mind with worry!"

The second mate rose to his feet and stood staring out of the port into the moonlight. His face was pale and set in hard lines of suffering. His mouth, never at the best of times a strong mouth, drooped at the corners and gave him an appearance of weakness and lack of character.

"Freddie," he said, almost in a whisper, "there's something else. I'm in a bigger mess than you've any idea. You may as well hear how I came to borrow money from Mogger!"

And then he turned with sudden wild energy and put his hands to his forehead and dropped them to his sides again.

"My ——! Freddie, I've been a fool! What a fool! But there's this, Freddie, it was before I'd met Helen!"

"Well, old son," said the second engineer, "tell us the worst! Perhaps I can help!"

The story the second mate told in a husky, faltering voice was not new. The second engineer had in his life at sea heard many far worse, and without the extenuating circumstances that Johnny Sledwood could plead, and without the consequences that in this particular instance had turned a sordid encounter on the waterfront into high tragedy.

"At first I thought no more about it," he said lamely. "I'd made an ass of myself, I was sorry. And then I met Helen! And whatever had happened before was wiped out! D'you understand what I mean, Freddie! Helen was everything! And then—well, then, I was told just what would become of me if I didn't pay what was asked!"

"Blackmail!" said Freddie quietly.

"Blackmail! If I didn't pay what was asked, then it would be all up!" He shot a queer, half-ashamed, half-defiant look at Freddie. "They threatened to go straight to Helen and tell her the whole story! We'd been married, then, about four months! Freddie, it would have broken her heart!"

"But, good ——! Johnny, do you mean to say that you paid?"

"What else could I do?"

"Johnny, old man, why didn't you go to your wife? Why didn't you tell her everything? She loves you, Johnny, doesn't she? Of course she does! Then I don't care what you've done! If you were sorry, if it all happened before you married her, before you'd even heard of her, then she'd have forgiven you! Didn't you know it'd be better to tell her than to store up all this trouble for both of you? You ought to have told her!"

He paused and stared blankly at the stricken face of the second mate.

"Supposing she finds out now!" he said.

"She'll find out all right!" said the second mate miserably. "Mogger told me he knows why I wanted that money! He's going to expose me unless I pay him!"

Freddie considered. Poor old Johnny Sledwood! It seemed devilish that a swine like Mogger should have the power of smashing a good little chap like Johnny Sledwood! But a hundred and twenty pounds! Gosh! Where were they going to get a hundred and twenty pounds from?

"If he knew all along," said Freddie, "why hasn't he told you before? It's not like Mogger to keep a thing like that to himself, is it!"

The second mate shrugged his shoulders listlessly.

"He says he knows; it's the kind of thing he would know, too! What's more, he'll probably tell, whether I pay him or not! But I can't pay him, so let's not talk of it any more, Freddie!"

He put his coat on and took down his cap from its peg.

"Well, Freddie, it's close on eight bells and I've got to be trotting, or the mate will just about kill me! There's your pouch on the bureau!"

He smiled a twisted, quavering, half-hearted smile and went on.

"When I heard he was killed, Freddie, I was ready to go down on my knees and thank God! Shows what I've got to, doesn't it! This will be my last voyage on the old *Samarkand*, of course! I'm sorry for Helen, poor little girl! Oh, God! Freddie, what's to become of us? Mogger's ruined me, and I can't do a thing! I'm finished!"

And although Freddie Carstow had been listening intently to all that Johnny Sledwood had told him, although he had missed nothing of the tragedy of his story, and pitied him from the depths of his heart, his mind was tired and it was not until Johnny Sledwood spoke of his last voyage on the *Samarkand* that he grasped the full significance of what had happened to him in the engine-room and its connection with what he had been hearing now.

Mogger knew something against Johnny, and was going to expose him! Mogger would ruin him and his wife, would part them, if he could, or drive them into the slums of Cardiff, without mercy, because he was a blackguardly, foul-hearted ——! But then, of course, *that* was impossible! What power had Mogger now?

Freddie pondered. Supposing he said Mogger had tried to kill him and Mogger denied it! What could he do? What proofs could he give? It was his word against Mogger's and that was all!

True, what had Mogger been doing in the engine-room? How could Mogger explain the razor? He might try, of course! But would he try? Would he dare?

And then Freddie broke into a little laugh. What on earth was he worrying about? What a fool he was! At heart Mogger was a coward! He had only to threaten him with arrest for attempted murder and, proof or no proofs, the bluff would win! Mogger was finished at last!

Freddie strode forward and clapped his hands on the second mate's shoulders and shook him gently.

"Johnny, I'm crazy! Good ——! Here I've been listening to you all this time, and I might have told you ten minutes ago! Mogger can't touch you! Do you understand? I know enough about Mogger to get him shoved into prison! I can't say any more now, but it's the truth! Mogger can't touch you! My gosh! Why, that little rat will be sorry he ever was born before I've done with him! You wait!"

The second mate stared at him with an incredulous look in his tired eyes.

"I don't understand. But if it's true, Freddie—if it's true——"

He stopped, unable to say any more. And then there came from the bridge the faint *clang-clang*, *clang-clang*, *clang-clang*, *clang-clang*, of the bell.

"I've got to go," he said hoarsely. "I'm late already."

Freddie went back to his own room, grinning happily.

X

MR. MOGGER lay in his bunk in his room next the pantry. He looked old and evil and miserable. His eyes peered ferociously, yet fearfully at Freddie Carstow, from under a white bandage bound around his head. Something in his appearance, his swollen nose, limp mustache, the ghastliness of his skin, his mauve lips and eyelids put Freddie in mind of a drowned corpse taken from the water and miraculously revived to life.

The room was untidy; clothes were littered everywhere; there was a sickly smell of unclean linen and stale whisky and cigar smoke; in the wash-basin there swilled about from side to side half a pint of water—the color of mud.

"Well, mister!" said Mr. Mogger feebly. "Well, what is it yer want?"

"One arm in a sling, broken," said Freddie. "That's right! Now, let's see the other arm, Mogger, just to be on the safe side!"

Mr. Mogger displayed his right hand on the blankets.

"There you are, mister, both o' them!"

"Good! I'm taking no more chances after yesterday evening. And now I'm going to talk to you!"

Mogger gave a muttered groan.

"Why can't yer let me alone!" he said.

"We're due home tomorrow," said Freddie, "and I thought I'd better come and tell you how matters stand! You tried to kill me, Mogger! Keep that in your mind and don't forget it!"

He came closer to the bunk and scowled at the white-faced steward.

"You're a —— thief, a fence, the next best thing to a murderer, and you may be hurt, but, by gum! I've not got an ounce of pity left for you! Any thought I might have had of holding my hand went directly I saw that —— razor of yours! If I hadn't given you that punch in the jaw, you'd have corpsed me!"

"Don't be too 'ard on me, mister! I didn't mean nothin'! A man ain't responsible when he's drunk, mister, now is he? I ain't got no more knowledge of what I tried to do in the engine-room than a new-born babe, so 'elp me ——! An' that's the livin' truth!"

Freddie smiled.

"—— good effort, Mogger, but just about useless! You're wasting your breath! I'm due on watch soon, so if you haven't got anything more sensible to say than that, don't say it! Now, you listen to me and pay particular attention. You tried to kill me! Drunk or not, what difference do you think it's going to make with the jury, eh? Or the judge? And, anyway, you weren't drunk! I'll get witnesses to prove you were hard-working, industrious, sober, steady, and that you'd never been seen to touch a drop of liquor from the beginning of a voyage to the end. There isn't an officer on board the *Samarkand* who wouldn't back me in that! From the captain down to the third engineer!

"Besides, there's your discharge book as evidence! Excellent character, always! You, drunk! Rubbish! And, besides, you —— old soak, you couldn't get drunk, if you tried night and day for a month! You're like a sponge! You tried to kill me with that razor of yours, and that's enough! Understand! Attempted murder, Mogger, on top of what I know already, will get you put away nicely until you're too old to do any one any more harm!"

He moved toward the door.

"That's all, Mogger, I thought I'd give you fair warning. The police will be waiting for us tomorrow!"

" 'Ere, for ——'s sake!" Mr. Mogger, stricken with panic, began to whimper. "Mister, don't run away from me! Listen to reason, for ——'s sake! I got a wife to think of, waiting for me at 'ome! Mister—listen!"

"A wife at home, of course! And a French woman you said you'd marry at Marseilles! Needn't look like that, Mogger, I know all about her, too!"

A look of vindictive rage passed over Mr. Mogger's bloated features.

"Then it was that —— slut, Gertie! That——"

Mr. Mogger broke off, unable to find words to express his feelings. He lay back on his pillow and breathed heavily.

"It was 'er, then—was it!"

"Don't jump to conclusions, Mogger! I'm not going to tell you who it was! It doesn't matter a ——, anyhow, how I came to find out about Peter the Greek, but I did find out, every —— thing!"

"For ——'s sake," said the steward, "once more, mister, just name yer price!"

Freddie Carstow studied him for some time without saying a word. Mogger had bitten! The end was in sight!

"Mogger," he said, "didn't I tell you never to talk like that again!"

"Mister!" said Mogger plaintively. "Mister, go slow with me, I'm all to pieces! It's a matter o' life an' death! Look 'ere, Mr. Carstow, look at it sensible—I was drunk last night an' I took that there razor out o' my pocket, just to scare yer not to mention Peter the Greek! Honest to ——, mister, I never meant to do yer no 'arm Look at it sensible! —— only knows what you found out about me, but whatever it is, it'll do yer no good! You'll get me, how much? Three years, per'aps! That's all! Why not look at it, my point of view? Say nothin', an' there'll be somethin' comin' to yer that will make yer pay for the voyage look like the price of a drink! Look at it sensible!"

Freddie Carstow's eyes narrowed; he frowned and plucked at his lower lip, as if considering the steward's offer. And then he said, very slowly, stooping, one hand to his mouth:

"Mogger, I've changed my mind! I told you you couldn't bribe me, or buy me off, but I've been thinking: Mogger I've a price, after all!"

A gleam of malicious triumph shot into

the bloodshot eyes under the white bandage.

"Told yer!" said Mr. Mogger.

Freddie went on slowly:

"If I let you off, what am I going to do about the captain? What he's going to say, lord knows! You can't treat a case of attempted murder as nothing and he'll say so pretty —— quick!"

Mr. Mogger waved his sound arm to and fro, hand open, as if fanning away all objections.

"You leave 'im to me, mister! I'll tackle 'im all right! If that's all that's worryin' yer— ——!" He laughed silently. " 'Ow much do yer want?"

And there was in Mr. Mogger's voice as he asked the question a note of malice; a warning, as it were, that he was slowly but surely recovering self-possession and his powers of fight.

"Mogger," said Freddie, "I'll let you off if you give me five thousand pounds! And — cheap at the price, too! Five thousand pounds or ten years!"

Mogger glared at him.

"Five thousand pounds! Where in ——'s name do yer think I'm goin' to get that from? Are yer crazy, or do yer think I am, or what?"

"Five thousand pounds!" said the second engineer quietly.

"You're a blackmailer!" said Mogger with a snarl. "A blasted blackmailer, that's what you are, an' a —— bad one, too! Five thousand! Why, I ain't got it!"

Freddie Carstow thrust his hands deep into his trouser pockets.

"You have got it!" he said.

"Clever, ain't yer?" said Mr. Mogger.

His one sound hand, the stains of nicotine all over the stumpy fingers, beat furiously on the blanket that covered him.

"D'jer mean to say I wouldn't pay yer, just to get shut o' yer, if I could! But I ain't got no five thousand, no, nor nothin' like it, nor two thousand, neither! 'Ow could I? Mister, what's the use of tormentin' me?"

Beads of sweat trickled down the steward's cheeks and nose.

"Mister, name some kind o' price within reason! For ——'s sake!"

"Mogger," said Freddie, "I'm going to have five thousand pounds out of you!" He paused. "Or it's equivalent!" Again he paused and gazed very earnestly at the wretched Mogger. "Now, Mogger, where's that I. O. U. the second mate gave you? Fork it over! I want it. I want also a written receipt, saying you've been paid in full, every —— penny he owed you! What's more, I want another statement, saying you've no further claim against him and that you withdraw everything you ever said about him or any other officer, deck or engineer, on board the *Samarkand*, and that you've been telling a pack of lies about 'em! You understand! Under those conditions, I'll agree to say nothing about that shot of yours at killing me! Otherwise, a wireless message is sent tonight to Scotland Yard!"

Mogger lay back on his pillow, with his eyes shut. He said nothing for a long time. Freddie Carstow waited.

"And you give me your word," said Mogger, opening his eyes, "you give me your word not to split!"

"I give you my word, Mogger!"

"Well, you got me, ain't yer! You got me tight, mister! Clever, ain't yer?" He lapsed into silence. "An' what can I do? Nothin'! I got to trust yer! I got to——"

He raised himself on his right elbow.

"An' supposin' I tell yer to go to ——?"

"I can't imagine an all-wise Deity paying the least attention! Apart from making yourself more ridiculous than you are at present, it wouldn't do you a —— pennyworth of good! You'd go to clink! You give me that I. O. U. of the second mate's, write me a receipt for the money, in full, and then I'll dictate what I want you to put on that statement I mentioned! Those are my terms! Take 'em or leave 'em, it makes no diff'rence!"

A quarter of an hour later Freddie Carstow held in his hand the three papers that were the price of Mr. Mogger's safety.

"That's excellent," he said. "*Très bon!*" He chuckled. "Mogger, this is the best day's work you've done for years—the most honest, anyway!"

He moved once more in the direction of the door.

"By the way, I hear you're leaving the ship!"

"I —— well am leavin' the ship!" snarled Mr. Mogger.

"That's excellent, too!" said Freddie. "And, mind you don't go back on it, either! For I tell you, Mogger, the more I see of you, the less I see in you to like! And if you give me any more trouble, look out for squalls!"

Mr. Mogger proceeded to curse the second engineer fluently.

"You get all that filth off your chest, Mogger, and you'll feel better! It's awful to think of it being stored up inside you, isn't it! What you ought to do is to swallow some of that cyanide stuff they fumigate the ship with to kill the bugs! That might help. But, anyway, that's quite enough to be going on with! You stop swearing, Mogger, this minute, or I'll do what I said I'd do and have you arrested the minute we reach Cardiff!"

Mr. Mogger judged it advisable to obey.

"You'd better clear out," he said, "my 'ead's bad!"

"I'm not surprized," said Freddie. "You know what you've got to do, don't you? You'll go to the captain and you'll explain how it is you're not going to be prosecuted for attempted murder! Understand!"

"I understand,'! said Mr. Mogger gloomily. "You leave 'im to me!"

It was a quarter to four when the second engineer tapped at the door of the second mate's room. One bell had just struck and Johnny Sledwood was sitting in his bunk, dressing, as he entered.

"Hullo, Freddie, what's up?"

For answer Freddie Carstow gave him the three papers.

"These are for you, Mogger's compliments! The I. O. U. you can tear up; the other two you freeze on to like Billy-be——! They're valuable!"

For a long time the second mate was unable to say a word. He sat in his bunk, the papers in his hands, and stared with a bewildered look at Freddie. And then he said:

"My ——, Freddie! I can't believe it!"

Terribly embarrassed, Freddie saw tears in his eyes.

"I'm free at last! How can I thank you, Freddie! I don't even know how to begin!"

"Don't try!" said Freddie. "It's not worth it!"

"But, how did you manage it? It's like a miracle—and I'd given up hope!"

Freddie explained, thankful that he could explain without having to break his promise to Mrs. Tawes and mention Peter the Greek or the pearl necklace.

"Mogger's fall from the middle grating last night wasn't an accident," he said. "I hit him. I told you I knew enough about Mogger to get him shoved into clink, didn't I? This is it! Mogger came down to the engine-room last night and tried to kill me with a razor!"

"Good ——!" said Johnny Sledwood. "But what are you going to do about it?"

"Not a —— thing! You see, Johnny, I've told no one but you! Not even the skipper. I was going to tell the chief last night, but he had neuralgia; then, when you told me Mogger had threatened you, I thought I'd hang on a bit and see what I could do with him myself! Understand! Those papers are the price of not taking any steps against him!" Then he grinned. "Matter of fact, Johnny, nobody saw us scrapping! It would have been my word against Mogger's. The only point in my favor is what was he doing in the engine-room at all? And why had he brought his razor with him, eh? It wasn't to shave with, anyway! I had him scared stiff just now. He can't do a thing, of course. He's finished! Down and out for the count! Lord! You ought to have seen his face when I gave him my terms!"

And then Freddie looked at his watch.

"Golly! In six minutes' time I'm due on watch! I'll have to fly!"

"But, Freddie, wait a sec!" The second mate still seemed dazed. "Are you keeping this, about Mogger trying to kill you, a secret or what?"

Freddie nodded, his hand on the door knob.

"Yes. I'll have to tell the old man, that's all!" He laughed. "You see, Johnny, I told Mogger he'd have to go to him and explain that he'd given me a document, saying he'd been telling a pack of lies about the officers on board the ship, bringing charges that were false and so on, and that in return I'd promised not to press the charge of attempted murder against him! And now I must run!"

The second mate came out of his trance at last.

"Freddie," he said, "I'm more grateful to you than I know how to say! You've made life possible—you've——"

But Freddie Carstow, satisfied with a good day's work, had slid out of the door and was making his way through the alleyway toward the bridge-deck and the engine-room.

XI

MR. MOGGER, feeling desperately sorry for himself, came on deck just as Mrs. Mogger arrived on board the ship. Their meeting took place in public, much to Mr. Mogger's discomfort, for directly his wife saw his bandaged head, his swollen nose and his broken arm in its sling, she uttered a wail of despair and running to him put her arms about him and kissed him on the cheek.

"Alf!" she said. "Oh, my dear, dear Alf, what 'ave they been doin' to my poor little boy! Alf, who done it?"

Mr. Mogger, affected beyond speech, so weak did he feel and so neglected, patted her shoulder gently and permitted her to lead him to his own room.

Later Mrs. Mogger came on deck. The second mate and the second engineer stood by the rails on the bridge-deck, talking and waiting to go on shore.

It was a tribute to Mr. Mogger's personality that after twenty-five years of married life his wife could still regard him as her hero. Who else was there fit to put on his level? It followed that, in her opinion, every one on board his ship—his shipmates of whatever grade or rank—must feel an interest in him corresponding to the interest she felt.

"My husband's been badly 'urt!" she remarked. "I'm takin' him home, soon as I can. What's more, he ain't comin' back. I won't let him go to sea again. He ain't strong, an' I ain't satisfied that he's been treated jus' right aboard this ship. Some one's been makin' things 'ard for him! He's too much of a man to say but I got my suspicions!"

Here she fixed her bespectacled gaze on the second engineer.

"Yes, my husband's too good a man to have to mix with the likes o' you-know-'oo, an' if the cap fits wear it, by all means! He don't need to! An' why? Because he's been industrious an' 'ard-workin' an' instead of scrapin' along, havin' to borrow money an' such like, he's got a tidy nest-egg put by! Yes, the best ain't none too good for my Alf! An' when he's feelin' more like his old self, Alf's going to take me to Orstralyer! He says there's no scope for a man like 'im in England! He wants to make his way on his own merits! I'm sure he's going to be a big man some day. He'll be happreciated over there. 'Ere brains don't count!"

And seeing that Mrs. Mogger expected some comment on her remarks and not wishing to disappoint her, the second engineer said—

"Well, it'll be a great disappointment not having your husband with us on the next voyage, Mrs. Mogger, I'm sure!"

He felt afterwards that possibly he had not managed to introduce the right amount of sincerity into his tone. Mrs. Mogger's pinched face flushed and her brown eyes looked at him coldly through her big, steel-rimmed glasses.

"Mister, from what my Alfie let fall jus' now, he ain't got no reason to feel you done yer best to be friendly! He ain't a talker, my Alf, but he's easy to read. He couldn't deceive me, if he wanted to. I know what he's thinking about always. He's the most honorable man alive, Alf is, an' the most sensitive. It was you what was with him when he got hurt, wasn't it! Seems to me, mister, you might have done somethin' to save him from that bad fall he 'ad! You're a younger an' stronger man than my Alf—he's been delicate always—why couldn't you just 'elp him, instead of standing there an' watch him fallin' off that ladder? No fault of yours, mister, he wasn't killed!"

And then without another word Mrs. Mogger left them to go to her husband who called to her from the saloon alley-way.

"She doesn't like me, does she!" said the second engineer.

The second mate sighed:

"I wish they'd let us go! I want to see those two youngsters of mine and the wife!"

EARLY the following afternoon the hands of the *Samarkand* had gathered together outside the shipping office, waiting to sign off. The second engineer arrived and stood a little distance away by himself, smoking and watching them idly and wondering when or if, he would see any of them again.

Pug Teame, the big fireman, dressed in his best clothes—a blue suit and a soft, gray hat—approached and asked if he might speak to him.

"Why, yes," said Freddie, "go ahead!"

Teame winked.

"I want to thank yer, sir! I ain't enj'yed myself like I did that night at Marseilles, I dunno when. A grand fight, wasn't it?"

"Going into training?" asked the second engineer.

Teame plucked at his lower lip and frowned.

"Dunno about trainin', mister! I'm thinkin' o' settlin' down somewhere. I'm kind of tired of this here life aboard ship, firin'. I want somethin' a little less 'ard—more comfortable, like—a glass of whisky an' a fire to set by night times; no crawlin' out o' bed in the middle of the night at one bell!"

Freddie was interested.

"What do you propose doing, then?"

Again Teame winked.

"Fac' o' the matter is, sir, I've got a scheme up my sleeve. I ain't forgiven that man, Mogger, the w'y he got me to promise to lick yer! See! Well, 'e's tryin' to shyke me off! Won't 'ave nothin' to do with me, an' so on, but 'e don't know, Mr. —— Mogger don't, 'e don't know an' he don't suspect that he's goin' to pervide a 'ome for me as long as I want!"

"Well," said the second engineer, "if you're clever enough, Teame, to get anything out of the steward, you're welcome to it! Only——"

Here Freddie hesitated and frowned.

"Only you're biting off a big mouthful, Teame, that's all! Mogger isn't going to support you for the fun of having you round, is he? Got any reason to think he is!"

"Ah!" Teame's scarred face wrinkled into creases of merriment. "He made a fool of me, I'm going to make a fool of 'im! See, mister! There's things I know about him he don't know I even imagine!"

"What things?"

"Ah, that's tellin', mister! But what I got in mind is somethin' that if it got out would land 'im in the jug!"

"Well, I don't know what you're driving at, Teame, but you'd better be careful! You'll go getting yourself into trouble! The steward can take care of himself!"

"And he can take care of me, too!"

"Supposing he won't!"

Teame laughed.

"I've got witnesses. Catwill an' Carris. Only I don't want them in, mister, if I can 'elp it! You see, they didn't *actually* see what I seen! They weren't there, in fact. But if Mogger don't come through, then, I'll tell 'im they saw, an' I'll tell them they saw, an' the end of it will be Mogger'll 'ave three to support—not one!"

Pug Teame was a scoundrel, of course; almost as bad as Mogger, Freddie was well aware; nevertheless there was something likable about the man that blunted his sensibility to the enormity of his plan to make Mogger support him or give him money! It was wrong, of course, from whatever point of view—and yet what could he do? Warn Mogger! Tell Teame he would get him into trouble if he did what he had planned! Ridiculous! And, remembering all that had happened on the voyage from Marseilles; how he had used what the plump little woman, Mrs. Tawes, had told him about Peter the Greek to frighten Mogger, how he had allowed him to go free after trying to kill him; how he had even refrained from telling Teame how Mogger had "fallen"—from some momentary distrust of the big fireman's motives—Freddie Carstow felt all of a sudden powerless to interfere.

If Teame knew anything against Mogger—and Heaven knew there was plenty to know—then he was welcome to go ahead and do the best he could for himself! But how could he get anything out of Mogger? In the end, the inevitable end, Mogger would smash him!

And then the captain and the chief engineer arrived and Pug Teame, his smile gentle but his eyes hard, held out his hand.

"So long, mister! 'Ope to see yer agyne, somed'y! Lord! If I'd your brain an' my muscle, I'd make ol' Jack Dempsey look like a before-tykin'-somebody's-pills advertisement! But it's the whisky what does it, o' course! If I sup down more'n one bottle, I'm out! So what's the good!"

And then they separated. Freddie Carstow, wondering what was the secret the fireman guarded so jealousy, entered the shipping office to sign off. Afterward he waited in the street again for the chief engineer who was talking to the old man.

Mr. Mogger, still looking pale and sour, came out with the remainder of the crew and glared at the second engineer who smiled at him.

"You scored, didn't yer?" he said, without attempting to hide his venom. "Well, you 'ave, so far, but it ain't finished yet! I can't say what I feel, for reasons, but I won't forget, an' mebbe my turn will come yet! An' when it does, if I ever get you under my thumb, —— 'elp yer, for no human bein' will!"

Mrs. Mogger, the dutiful wife, hurried to Mr. Mogger's side and thrust her arm through his.

"Come, Alfie!" she said. "Let's get away from 'ere! You won't do no good, Alfie, mixin' with a pack of low mates an' engineers who might have been born an' bred in the gutter the way they be'ave! Come away this minute!"

Mr. Mogger turned on his heel. But Teame stood at his elbow, grinning.

"Mr. Mogger," he said, "I got something to s'y to yer. It's himportant!"

"You can't then," said Mrs. Mogger. "We're in a hurry!"

"Mogger," said the fireman firmly, "you're goin' to listen!"

"I ain't got time," said Mr. Mogger.

"Yus, you 'ave! All the time between now an' when you're an old man suckin' yer gums!"

And in order to prevent Mr. Mogger from being hustled away by Mrs. Mogger he held the steward by his sound arm and began to speak in a low, harsh voice that carried clearly to where the second engineer stood watching.

"Mogger, I got a little story to tell yer missus. 'Ow you fell from the middle gratin' an' got 'urt! It's one of the most 'eroic stories I know. Mrs. Mogger, yer 'usband's a hero. I seen it all. Ah!"

Mr. Mogger had gone first red and then white. Freddie Carstow listened in helpless bewilderment. He took a step forward and then stopped. The fireman was grinning as if his conversation with Mr. Mogger was the friendliest conversation imaginable and not a series of threats behind which there lurked the menace of ruin and imprisonment unless whatsoever he chose to demand was granted.

"That touches the spot, don't it!" he said. "I was watchin' from between the b'ilers. No one knew, but there I was—just watchin'-like! I seen it all, Mrs. Mogger."

Mr. Mogger made an agitated gesture with his sound hand, but Pug Teame continued blandly:

"Yer 'usband, poor feller, overbalanced, an' my 'eart purty nigh stopped beatin'! I was struck all of a 'eap! 'E 'ad a razor in 'is 'and, too! Hadn't yer, Mogger? You was goin' to shyve yerself, wasn't yer! Might 'ave cut 'isself, mightn't 'e, Mrs. Mogger, eh? Or some one else? Ah! That 'e might! I seen everything, from start to finish!"

A little group of deck-hands, laughing and talking and planning where they would have their first drink, drew near.

"For ——'s sake, Teame, drop it!" said Mr. Mogger.

"I ain't near done yet, mister!" said the fireman with dry relish. "What s'y I come wi' yer, eh? Then we can do our talkin' more peaceful-like! It's too crowded 'ere, ain't it? Some one might over'ear us!"

There was a note in the fireman's voice that made his friendly, amiable smile a mockery of cynical contempt.

The second engineer knew now that Teame had intended him to hear. Once more he started forward, half-heartedly. Mogger was a low ——, of course, but this plan of Teame's was no more than blackmail; he couldn't permit it, not for one moment.

And then he halted. What could he do? Nothing. The thought of the second mate came to him! Mogger must fight for his own hand.

Already the Moggers, husband and wife, and the big fireman, as ill-assorted a trio as he had ever seen, were moving away. Pug Teame, carrying his sea-bag over his shoulder, walked with buoyant strides. Mrs. Mogger held her head erect, her thin body straight. She looked like one whose highest happiness was this: To go through life by the side of her husband, that honorable gentleman! Mr. Mogger, alone of the three, seemed bowed down by care. There was in his gait a limpness that not even his physical injuries warranted him in assuming.

The second engineer watched them, deep in thought. The chief engineer came out of the shipping office.

He, too, watched the Moggers.

"Ma ——!" he said. "An' thonder gangs the biggest crook an' the hardest heartit blackguard that e'er signed a ship's articles! Mister, there's no' a livin' soul aboard the *Samarkand* that winna breathe mair freely noo thon baikie's gaun! Naebuddy's e'er got the better o' Mogger, naebuddy wull!"

Pug Teame, the fireman, turned and waved his hand. The gesture was, to Freddie Carstow, a fitting comment on what the chief had just said: A symbol of triumph, of victory, a signal that all was well. The future of one member of the *Samarkand's* disreputable crew was safe!

And that was the last that the second engineer ever saw of either Mr. Mogger or Teame. They vanished out of his life, as completely as if in turning that corner away from the shipping office in Cardiff they had disappeared from off the face of the earth. One moment he saw them, in full view, the next there was nothing but the drab street and the dingy houses and the hot sunshine.

In the voyages that followed that first voyage on board the *Samarkand* to Marseilles and back, the second engineer often allowed his mind to dwell on the events that had led to Mogger leaving the sea. He wondered what had happened to the strange and—on the part of one member of the firm, at least—unwilling partnership.

Had Pug Teame been forced to produce his two unsuspecting witnesses, Catwill and Carris, or had his word, backed by the accuracy of his description of the scene on the middle grating been sufficient to convince the steward that he knew everything? Had they left Liverpool and emigrated to Australia, where the talents of Mr. Mogger would have full scope, or were they still in England?

Had Mr. Mogger continued to dabble in the illicit transactions that had brought him money and power, or did Mrs. Mogger, now that her husband was no longer away at sea, control his comings and goings and keep his activities at that level of excellence that she had fondly imagined was his? Or had she discovered his true character and broken her heart in grief at the fall of her idol? And what was the true significance of that mysterious talisman—the name of Peter the Greek? Who was Peter the Greek? Why had Mr. Mogger given up hope, abandoned all thought of fight so completely, when he had been told that his connection with Peter the Greek was known?

And what of the necklace of pearls?

These and many other problems did Freddie Carstow debate often.

And altogether he talked freely with the other engineers and the mates about Mr. Mogger and his strange and wild behavior on his last voyage, and although he heard many strange theories advanced to account for his sudden departure, he never, not even to the second mate, breathed a word of how he had met Gertie Tawes in Marseilles and how, one thing leading to another, what she had told him in the confectioner's shop had brought Mogger down to the engine-room with his razor to kill him.

XII

TWO years had passed since Mr. Mogger had left the sea. The S. S. *Samarkand* was discharging a cargo of Black Sea grain at Millwall Dock. Freddie Carstow, still the second engineer, had asked permission to go ashore early in the afternoon. His business finished, he wandered west. Tea-time found him in Old Bond Street, the heart of London's fashionable shopping world. Undecided what he should do with himself, now he was so far from his accustomed haunts, he stood on the footpath and looked warily about him at the crowds of well-dressed men and women who went by him, immersed in their own affairs, the wonderful shops, the endless passage of vehicles, huge red omnibuses driven by haggard, sharp-eyed men, taxis, private motors of unbounded luxury, and lorries.

A gorgeous limousine of royal blue and silver drew up at the curb near where he stood. A young footman, dressed like the chauffeur in blue livery, slid from his seat and opened the door. A lady in black satin, with a small black hat, fawn silk stockings and black satin pumps, alighted and gave him some directions.

Freddie, astounded by a likeness to some one he had once met somewhere, but where he did not know, watched her from the entrance to a photographer's. She was stout and very refined in her manner, her voice was clear but low-pitched, her clothes struck him as being expensive, the color of her hair was a deep, rich gold, and around her plump neck was a beautiful pearl necklace.

She turned away from the footman who touched his cap and closed the door of the limousine.

Freddie Carstow decided suddenly that he had been mistaken. The stout, golden-haired lady was a stranger.

He turned and made his way slowly down the slope of the narrow little street toward the sunshine and clamor of Piccadilly.

And then he heard a discrete little cough close at hand. He glanced quickly over his shoulder to the left. The stout lady in the wonderful clothes had drawn level with him. She looked straight to her front, her face was grave, her lips firm, but as she passed him her right eyelid quivered the merest fraction of an inch.

Perplexed and startled, Freddie followed her slowly. He did not believe that she had really intended to wink at him, but what else was he to think! Her action had seemed so deliberate and guarded!

She entered a large confectioner's. He waited outside, still puzzled, and saw her in the shop, gazing toward the street. She beckoned. He entered, uncertain even now whether he had done right or not, and she held out her hand impulsively.

"It's Freddie Carstow," she said, "isn't it? Well, how are you?"

He stared at her blankly.

"I'm afraid you have the advantage!"

Again he tried to remember where he had seen her or some one like her!

"You mean to say you've forgotten *me!*" said the stout lady. A shade of disappointment passed across her features. "It's not because I'm looking older, I bet!"

She broke into a little giggle and once more there stood in front of him the Gertie Tawes of Marseilles.

"Older!" he gasped. "Older! *You!* You look so—so stunning I didn't know you! Like your own daughter!"

She laughed at that, frankly.

"You will have it, won't you!" she said. "I'd have spoken to you in the street but that chauffeur of mine, he's inclined to be too inquisitive. And Mrs. Tawes—well, you see, *that* was only a name! Let's have some tea! Downstairs is the best place, we can talk without being interrupted! Pollieri's my name now. Mrs. Pollieri—and my husband!" She giggled again. "Rich isn't the word for it!"

They descended the broad stairway and sat at a table in a far corner of the paneled room and drank China tea and ate cream cakes and smoked cigarets and talked.

"Like old times, isn't it!" said Freddie Carstow. "Remember that night?"

"Yes," she said. "It's a long way from here to Marseilles! Like a dream, ain't—isn't it, looking back! That night you were going to meet your friend!"

She gave a little shiver and sat staring into vacancy, a far-away look in her blue, childish eyes that Freddie remembered so well.

"I was having a hard time in those days," she said. "Dear God, yes! And to think what a woman will do when she's next to starving! But, that horrible man, Mogger ——"

She shuddered.

More and more, as he studied her, and listened to her talk, did Freddie recall the painted, tortured, sorrowful Gertie Tawes whom he had so distrusted. Even her voice, as she mentioned the names he knew so well and brought to his mind the scenes of that strange and eventful period, took on again the accents of Liverpool, the curious nasal drawl, the clipped words, the inflexions that were all so very different from the clear, well-bred voice she had used when she had spoken to her footman in Bond Street.

He leaned back in his chair and heard her talk about her home in South Kensington—the most splendid place you could imagine—her house in the country, Berkshire—with a park and gardens you could lose yourself in, easy—and her flat in Paris! She laughed heartily at that. A flat in Paris! And once she had known Mogger! Once she had traveled third class to Marseilles, sitting up all night, because Mogger had need of her! She was amused at first, then thoughtful.

She had wealth, undoubtedly; that much was evident; what was more, she was happy. Freddie was glad of that! He remembered what she had told him. Marseilles was —— on earth for a woman! It was true, he knew. Yet she had refused his help! Abandoned by Mogger, she had had her pride! She deserved her happiness.

The plump lady with the fair hair that had once been bronze was silent. He raised his eyes and saw that she was watching him closely.

"Tell me," she said, "you're dying of curiosity, aren't you? You want to know how it is that in two years I've reached Bond Street, a limousine, two houses, a flat in Paris!"

He nodded.

"Yes, I'm curious." He went on quickly. "But if you'd rather not, don't say a word! I won't mind!"

"You offered to help me once, when I needed help! But I didn't take it." She smiled to herself, an inscrutable smile, that seemed to hide the multitude and bitterness of her thoughts. "That man, Mogger, now! What became of him? Did you ever tell him about Peter the Greek?"

Freddie nodded once more.

"I did," he said.

Briefly he related how Mogger had left the *Samarkand*, pursued by fear. The woman's face was very serious, her eyes clouded.

"He disappeared," said Freddie in conclusion. "Went off with his wife and was never heard of again, not by any one *I* knew, anyhow! I never told any one else but him about Peter the Greek! I used the name and it helped. Mogger was a cold-blooded little brute; he had a man—a friend of mine—in his power! As soon as I spoke of Peter the Greek he gave up, let go of everything, cleared off the ship, vanished! I've often wondered what exactly it was that frightened him! Roughly, I know, I suppose! But details!" He shrugged his shoulders. "No importance, of course. Curiosity again! But, Peter the Greek, now; I've often thought of making inquiries; London, Liverpool, Marseilles, Genoa; but I never have. Not yet!"

The woman leaned forward and caught hold of his hands.

"Listen, Freddie, listen to me! Freddie's your name, isn't it! I've not forgotten! Peter the Greek! Well, you don't need to make no inquiries! Drop it! For my sake!"

She released one of his hands and touched the pearl necklance at her throat.

"You don't remember, of course, do you? But this, now—does it remind you of anything?"

He nodded.

"Yes, the necklace you showed me in the little package at Marseilles—d'you remember that waitress staring at us over the counter?"

"Yes, the necklace! Mogger's. The one that was stolen!"

She smiled a little tremulous smile.

"Freddie, it's this!"

And that staggered him. He stared blankly at the round, silvery-white globes on the white skin of the woman opposite. These were the pearls, then, that Mogger had lost! Here, after all these years!

"I kept them. I nearly starved for a month or two, but I kept them. Nobody knew, nobody suspected, or else——"

She sighed.

"You know Marseilles! How long would I have had 'em! How long would I have lived! I kept them till I got home! Oh, yes, I got home at last, or I wouldn't be here now! It would take me a week of Sundays to tell how it happened! I reached London, pearls and all! And then, I took 'em to Peter the Greek! Understand! I gave him the necklace and he was grateful for what I'd done! He'd made up his mind they were gone! Mogger had double-crossed him and cleared out! And after that, well, Freddie, I'd no more worries!"

Freddie waited patiently, wondering if her story was finished, trying to fill in the blanks that he knew existed.

"Is there anything more that you'd like to know?" said Mrs. Pollieri.

He hesitated before answering—

"Could you tell me something about Peter the Greek?"

She cast a quick glance at him from under her black lashes.

"I could. What do you want to know?"

"Who is he?"

She drummed on the table with her fingers.

"Strictly speaking," she said, "there's no such person. He's gone. Like that! *Poof!*"

She blew on her clenched fist and extended the fingers flat.

"Vanished, like Mogger!"

"Dead!" said Freddie.

Mrs. Pollieri shook her head.

"As alive as you are or I am! More, I think. The most alive man I know! Only he's not in business now. That's finished, done with, and next to forgotten! Peter the Greek's dead! As a matter of fact, he's Mr. Pollieri!"

Freddie stared at her in perplexity.

She laughed.

"I married him. Swear you won't breathe a word of what I'm telling you!"

He nodded, unable to speak.

"I married him. It was the necklace brought us together. He said any one as clever as I was ought to make him a good wife. That was his very words. I have, too. He said so again only this morning. Soon as he saw me that day, me in my old rags, without heels to my shoes, he knew I was made for him. Queer that, wasn't it! This necklace now! Stolen, eh? Well, it wasn't! We had a talk, Mr. Pollieri and me, and we decided it wouldn't do! He was tired —and I was tired, —— knows!—of how things were going! The necklace was sent back to the woman who owned it. Understand! We were scared, if we didn't, our luck might change!

"Then, Mr. Pollieri, he kept track of it, and six months ago it came on the market and he bought it by way of remembrance of what it stood for! Understand! An' a pretty penny it cost, too! He's generous, is Mr. Pollieri! I'd like you to meet him, Freddie, but somehow, knowing all you know and all I know—Marseilles, that devil Mogger and all the rest of it—mebbe it's better not! It's right that a husband should know all there is to know, o' course, but it's sometimes as well he don't know there's others who know it besides him!"

Having delivered this profound truth, Mrs. Pollieri broke off with another little sigh and sat with her elbows on the table, her knuckles propping her plump chin, her blue eyes staring into vacancy.

"You don't think much of me, do you?" she said suddenly. "But I had a tough time of it, Freddie! Tougher'n you'd think, perhaps! Life wasn't worth much, not till I met Mr. Polliere, and then it was like the sun breaking through the clouds on a rainy day! He's the best man in the world—Mr. Pollieri! The very best! You don't grudge me my happiness, do you?"

"Grudge you your happiness?" said Freddie Carstow with a catch in his throat. "Good lord, no! Listen to me: Mr. Pollieri may be the best man in the world, just as you say he probably is—I don't know—but I do know this much: He's the luckiest! I never met any one braver than you in my life, or better, or more splendid! There! That's straight!"

Mrs. Pollieri smiled at him through her tears.

"How you do run on!" she said.

AND late that night on board the *Samarkand*, Freddie asked Johnny Sledwood, now the mate, if he remembered a Mrs. Tawes.

"No," said Johnny Sledwood, "who was she?"

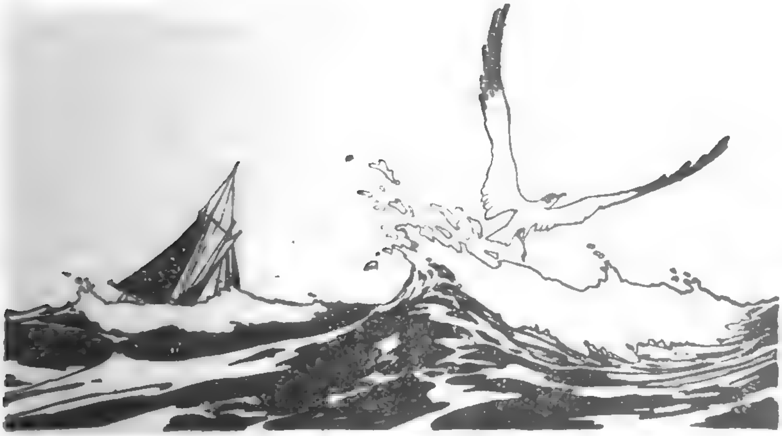
"She was with Mogger that night at Pondicherry Sam's! Do you remember? The day you had the wire about the twins!"

"Good lord!" said Johnny. "I remember now. Mogger's lady friend! As bad as Mogger himself! Horrible creature!"

This was unfair, of course. For a moment Freddie was angry. He thought of telling Johnny exactly how he had been saved from the clutches of Alf Mogger, and then he recollected what Mrs. Pollieri had said and decided to say nothing. Peter the Greek was dead! Gertie Tawes was dead, too!

"What made you speak about her?" asked Johnny presently.

"Oh! I dunno," said Freddie. "Saw a woman today in Bond Street who looked like her, that's all!"



"Red Pig" of the North

by Barry Scobee

Author of "Land Love," "White Men Stick Together," etc.

ONE Missouri Summer day Johnny Wentworth, young baggage smasher at the railway station, stepped on the scales to humor a traveling man.

"Holy cow!" exclaimed the stranger. "Three hundred and forty-seven pounds! And you're six feet two."

"But otherwise O.K.," retorted Johnny.

He pranced off in the natural way he had of walking—with a teeter, like a Jumbo gone to toe-dancing, and threw a trunk up on his shoulder with one arm and took three suitcases under his other arm and started for the baggage room whistling. Just then "Dad," the station agent, came shuffling out.

"Johnny," he called, "hyar's a telegram for ye."

"Must be some other Johnny," responded the giant carelessly. "I never got a telegram in my whole life."

"Well, you got one now, sonny, and she sounds like a *ro*-mance."

Johnny twirled the trunk down to the platform and laid the three suitcases on top.

"Lemme see it," he said, dusting his palms.

He read it to himself, then read it aloud to Dad and the loafers:

> Your uncle's will leaves you ten-thousand-acre ranch on the Rio Grande with horses, goats, Mexicans and trouble. Come and get it.

It was signed by a county judge. Johnny Wentworth strutted and teetered around the trunk three times.

"You're rich," said Dad.

"But otherwise O.K.," sputtered Johnny. He jerked out Dad's watch and looked at the time.

"The two-twenty leaves at two-twenty," he said, all rattled. "All I got to say goodby to is a suitcase and I'll take that with me. Loan me money for a ticket, Dad, and I'll be on my way."

Four days later Johnny sat on the porch of a rambling house that perched on a hillside shelf and looked out over a segment of the Rio Grande and northern Mexico and remote and dusty horizons scorching under a red-hot sun. Beside him a gaunt old Mexican in a faded-blue denim shirt smoked a shuck cigaret and talked trouble.

"The ranch, she bustin' up," he said.

"How bustin' up?" asked Johnny.

"Thees Mex border robbers are stealing us empty, *señor*. The deputy sheriffs, they come. No robbers. Deputies go, plenty robbers to drive off our horses and goats. They talk to our ranch people. They say: 'Steal everything. Come into Mexico. Be rich.' Our people are running wild. They listen to the little bandit on the other side—el Burlón, the Jester. Today the Jester drive away a dozen of our goats."

"Not much loss, is it, goats?" asked Johnny indifferently.

It was hot. He had expected to own green fields and bulging barns when he arrived. He was disgusted.

"The people are leaving also, *señor*," said the old man. "They are more important than goats."

"How's that?"

"How's that!"

The ancient major domo of the hacienda who had been on hand to greet the new boss groaned in spirit.

"But they have been on the land many years, *señor!* They are a part of the place."

"What's the matter with 'em, Romeo?"

"Oh——"

Romeo shrugged.

"The ranch, she just bustin' up. She wouldn't bust up, *señor*, if your uncle had stayed here."

"How's that?"

"How's that! Your uncle kept them under hees thumbnail. When they get fresh he would take heem a gun or a whip and go out and get himself one of thees coffee-colored greasers."

Romeo himself was coffee-colored, but he was a native-born citizen of the United States and proud of it. He had been voting as a good citizen should since he was seventeen years of age. He could not read but he could count—count so many names down the ballot, as he had been instructed, and vote 'er that way.

"My uncle must have been a regular go-git-'em," observed Johnny.

"Ah, *señor!* He, what you say, sling the iron fist. They call heem Red Pig of the North."

"Eh?"

Johnny's interest ascended.

"What for?"

"Eet ees a Mexican custom sometimes. The white men have red cheeks, *sabe?* And he's big of voice, and he take what he want, and he walk all over the Mexicans, an' he say, 'Get outa my way; I want thees room here.' And the Mexicans they snarl behind hees back these words, 'Red Pig of the North.' "

"A kind of title of respect, eh?" said Johnny.

"No, *señor;* she ees a title of contempt."

"But they respected my uncle. You said so."

"Ummm," mused Romeo doubtfully at this. "What you say ees true, but—yes, I theenk maybe she ees also a title of respect. Yes, contempt *and* respect."

Johnny got up to get a drink at an *olla* hanging from the porch ceiling. A young Mexican came around the corner. A smirk was on his face, and he was about to address the old man. Then he saw Johnny. Romeo made an introduction.

"Pancho, thees ees the new boss, the nephew of our master who has went to Heaven. Hees name is Johnny. Señor Johnny, be pleased to meet Pancho, who has been second foreman after me and who has the much influence with the peoples."

"Oh," said Johnny, doing his prancy walk across the porch, "howdy, Mr. Pancho. Glad to meetcha. Big country you got here."

He stuck out a hand to shake, but Pancho disdained to see it. He looked Johnny over coolly and turned to Romeo.

"Say, ol' man," said he, "I come to tell you, 'Lupe she no get sugar and flour at the store. The man, he say no more we got boss here, no more we get credit. And Felipe, he been jailed for smuggling mescal and nobody make him bail to get out. We Mexicans no get protection and credit—no have boss on this hacienda we go away."

"Thees ees the new boss," began the old man, but Pancho grunted and gave them his back around the corner.

"Ho," said Johnny, "he acks like he owns this ranch."

"Trouble-maker," said Romeo. "A good boy he has been, but he's loose now, and he's got a girl on the other side of the river and wants to find an excuse to leave here to be with her over there. Oh, oh," wailed the ancient major domo in the manner of Job, "man born of woman ees of few days and chuck full of trouble. They steal our horses and goats and peoples. Discontent, she reign. The hacienda, she bustin' up."

Johnny sat down his great bulk thoughtfully on the edge of the porch.

"So they need a boss around here, eh?" he observed.

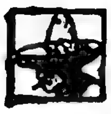
Gaunt old Romeo flashed a keen look at the youth from under his thatch of eyebrows. The grandad may have been hopeful to rouse a young man's ambition.

"Yes, *señor*, a boss. One who can rule them."

"Well," said Johnny, expanding a bit, "I'm the poor little baggage smasher from Missouri that can boss 'em—especially that spoiled baby you call Pancho, who ain't got a hand to shake with."

And *sotto voce* Johnny rolled meditatively the title of contempt and respect:

"Red Pig of the North. Red Pig of the North. She's raw and booms like a bass drum. Some title for a guy about my size. Som-m-m-me title!"



MEXICANS can put a lot into a word. They can wrap up a joke in one that will set a whole district to chortling.

"Little" was the word now. The *little* Red Pig of the North. They called Johnny that because, big as he was, he had not proved himself hefty enough to fill his uncle's boots.

That *little* stung Johnny because he knew its implication was true. In these two weeks he had failed to get a grip on the situation. The hacienda was disintegrating—border thieves, discontent, a spirit of mischief, a chance to steal and get into Mexico. As Romeo had said, the senior Red Pig of the North would have stopped it all with the might of his word and his gun; but the *little* Red Pig had not been born to rule with blood and iron, it seemed.

This forenoon Red Pig—as they called him now when they did not call him Johnny contemptuously—labored up the rocky slope from the river, bareheaded, disheveled. When he gained the shelf where the house perched, he paused, panting like a runner, to look back.

His gaze focused on a break in the cliff on the far side of the yellow Rio Grande, two miles away. The break was the entrance to a narrow defile that left the water and went back through *mal pais*—bad country—until it spread out on a semi-barren plain. Just entering the narrow pass was a knot of people and horses, and goats showing white against the gray-dun cliff.

"Hi, Romy!" called the giant, glancing behind him to the house. "Come here and lookit this."

No response came from the house. Red Pig went teetering petulantly to the door. The room he entered was a great "long room" with a fireplace and big windows on three sides. The original Red Pig of the North had provided it for a lookout and called it the Eagle's Nest. It commanded a vast stretch of the country. It had been comfortable, but now chairs and pictures and the phonograph and other furniture were gone, stolen by the deserting people—the serfs, practically, of the departed lord.

As soon as the little Red Pig was inside he began to complain in a loud voice for Romeo to hear.

"Our cake's dough. Our goose is cooked. I'm going over to northern Mexico with a slippery ellum club and clean up! *Little* Red Pig of the North! Johnny! I'll make 'em eat them words. Man ever calls me *little* again, or Johnny either, the scavenger'll have to rake up his parts. Hi, Romy, where are you?"

No answer from the stomach of the house. Red Pig pranced on, calling and opening doors and talking his plaint and threats.

"I'll go over and reform Mexico, that's what I'll do. Put 'em on the Sunday-school map. Can't no Mexes get ahead of me."

The rooms that he looked into had been looted of at least part of their furniture. From his uncle's bedroom a mirror had been taken off the dresser. Canvas bags that had been used to bring money from the bank, Romeo had said, were scattered on the floor. Blankets were gone from the bed. Even in the kitchen the pegs were stripped of utensils.

"Wriggle their hands on their noses at me, will they!" grumbled Red Pig. "Call me *little*, call me Johnny!"

Then he flung open the door of the junk room of the hacienda and beheld Romeo.

"Hi," thundered the big one, "know what's happened? The last Mex that belongs to this ranch is gone! Pancho dragged off the last and final stickers just now, Hernandez and Bonito and— They took the last of the horses and goats, too. And they called me Johnny-big-belly!"

Romeo shrugged and coughed behind his hand.

"Know what I'm going to do?" Red Pig went on. "We're stripped, cleaned. I let 'em get away with their cussedness. I been the fall guy. We're the laughin'-stock o' this end of the country. Know what I'm going to do? Go over and clean up on 'em!"

The old man smiled sadly, forgivingly.

"Well, I am. I gotta. My rep's ruined.

They called me Johnny and *little* Red Pig o' the North to my face! I'm going over and——"

"What will you do?" asked Romeo pointedly.

"Well, I'm going over."

"Ha-ha-haw!" shrieked the old man in sudden, mocking laughter. "You been say that. You no go."

"I won't, eh? Why won't I?"

Romeo dropped his face as if to conceal some cunning scheme there. He spoke gently, like an indulgent father.

"You no go because she ees dangerous."

"Dangerous! Say, d'y'think I'm afraid?"

"Eet ees invisible danger, *señor*. The danger of wits. You can't get ahead of the Mexicans."

"Can't I? I——"

"El Burlón, the Jester—he would outwit you, put you to shame. Trickery would deesgrace you."

Romeo pointed with his bonka-wood cane to four objects that sat in a row on the floor. Obviously they had just been brought to light from a box of old nails and worn horse-shoes and broken odds and ends of metal.

Four money bags they were, that had once been white but were now rust-stained and dry-rotted. They were stuffed and squat looking and lumpy, as if they were filled with good Yankee eagles and double eagles. One had burst open and spilled its disks in the dusky shadows. Young Red Pig went down to his knees and snatched up a double handful of the metal pieces.

Romeo chuckled sardonically. When Red Pig, in the dusty light from the one small window, saw what the disks were he flung them down scatteringly and got up, glaring at the old man.

"The danger for Americans from Mexicans," repeated Romeo cunningly, pointing at the rusty bags again, "is wits. The bags ees souvenirs of your uncle's first adventure across the Rio Grande to Mexican soil."

"Fine souvenirs, I'll say! Round pieces of boiler iron."

"Exactlee, *señor*. They were cut at Chihuahua City to fool your uncle, fifteen, twenty years ago."

"Didn't fool him, I'll bet."

"Ah, yes. You can't get ahead of the Mexicans. Your uncle, he acquired by one way mixed with another a big herd of cattle, and he arrange to sell them over the river, for the buyers there to drive down to Laredo perhaps, and sell back into Texas at a fine profit. Your uncle he drive them over by night.

"The next day in Caliente the deal is made. He is paid with four sacks of gold. He count the money and see and set the bags at his feet. He ees by a table with a big cloth. While he take a friendly drink that is offer to seal the trade, while he tip back hees head, so, to swallow, a man under the table behind the cloth switch the money bags. Your uncle do not know. When he get home he find thees boiler-iron money that have been cut in Chihuahua."

Red Pig scarcely heard the last. He was staring at the bags fascinatedly.

"You can not get ahead of the Mexicans," repeated Romeo, eying the youth, cunningly urging him on.

"Is that so?" sneered Red Pig.

He kept looking at the bags, and inspiration dawned in his face. All at once he burst into laughter. Haw-haw-haw!

"What ees eet, *señor?*"

"Say, old man? I'll give 'em a boss! I'm going over and get our stuff back, and our people. And I'll reform the whole river end o' Mexico."

"What you mean, *señor?*"

"I mean I'm going to learn that gang o' petty thieves not to call me Johnny, or *little* Red Pig o' the North. Me, I can get ahead of Mexicans!"

And still looking at the four rusty bags on the floor, the baggage smasher from Missouri went into guffaws of laughter that sounded like a fierce wind blowing down from the North to set Mexico to shivering.

LITTLE Red Pig of the North, old Romeo and a mouse-colored burro carrying four clean, white canvas bags marked *oro*—gold—just back of its withers, made their way through the narrow defile where Red had seen his horses and people disappear. It was hot, and the rocks crowded in so closely that Red Pig was able any time to stretch out his arms and touch the sides.

After a time the trail opened into a gaping mouth and the trio, two-thirds human, spewed itself on to a sandy plain that extended as far as the eye could reach through the shimmering heat haze. Barely visible in the hot sand sea were the deserters from the hacienda with the horses and goats. The wiggling heat made them look tall and sometimes oddly disjointed.

"They go to Caliente, ten miles from here, as I said they would," triumphed Romeo dourly. "Where the Jester hangs out and Pancho's girl sways like a candle flame to pull the moth Pancho."

"In a foreign country without a friend," answered Red cheerfully. "An' we got no passports, no guns and no sense—but otherwise O.K."

"No sense, seeing you yourself say it," chimed in the old man. "To think you hope to fool El Burlón with iron money!"

"You betcha. I'll buy back everything that's been stole off o' my ranch with that stuff they fooled my uncle with."

"How, *señor?*"

Romeo was coldly derisive.

"Oh, don't ask me how. Watch me."

"But it's a wise man who plans before he starts to cook a meal."

"All right, then, plan!"

So, as they trudged over the hot sand between cactus clumps, they turned over many ideas, but little nourishment did they find beneath them. In the late afternoon their talk ran out as they drew in sight of Caliente.

Caliente was like any other village in the region—a cluster of squat shacks made o' mud, with a plaza and a church. War had desecrated the church so that it was used now only as a loafing place where scoffers sat on the altar rail and whittled or travelers bunked down on the floor by night.

When Red and Romeo and the mouse-colored burro carrying the pocketbook arrived at the cluster of square, raw adobes they beheld a crowd assembled on the plaza in the shade of the church.

"The whole bloomin' village has turned out to look over the loot from our ranch," Red Pig gritted.

From out of the crowd came a flicker of sharp light—sunlight thrown by a mirror.

"The Jester joking," prophesied Romeo pessimistically.

They shielded their eyes with their hands and sidled over to get out of the mirror's angle of reflection. In their ears was the ribald laughter of the crowd entertained by the spectacle of an old man and a vast youth dangling a burro on a string and dodging sunlight.

When the trio approached the crowd a little, wizened man stood by a big, square mirror grinning.

"Lookit!" whispered Red. "The little monkey guy has got the glass out of my uncle's bedroom."

"El Burlón himself," whispered Romeo, in turn. "Beware!"

Red Pig, now that something new and strange threatened, was wholly himself. He teetered along in his ridiculous gait, one hand held out as if he were carrying a cherry between thumb and middle finger.

All at once the merry people caught sight of the money bags on the burro's back, and the laughter was blanketed by silence. They stared; some pointed; and El Burlón, the Jester licked his lips. Red Pig strode up to the latter and spoke amiably.

"Hello, cap. I see you've got my looking-glass."

"Did you come so far, you fancy cockerel, to see if your hair is combed?" asked El Burlón derisively.

Twitters of mirth in the crowd.

"Nope," answered Red. "I combed my ol' thatch last week. I've come over to buy back all the stuff you fellows have stole off o' me. See?"

He gave one of the money bags an affectionate twitch.

"Have you enough *oro*," asked the Jester with a wink at the people, "to buy back all we've stole?"

"You've swiped a lot," conceded Red Pig, "but when I get through buying, the whole north end of Mexico will feel like it's been sold."

Red Pig turned to look the crowd over, calling out names jovially as he caught sight of people from the hacienda.

"Hello, Victorio. Hello, Juan. And Maria! Also Pancho!"

Some shrank. Pancho was sultry. He had not expected the master of the ranch to venture into Chihuahua. Beside him stood a pretty girl, and Red Pig instantly became interested in her.

"Ho, so this is the candle-flame dame, eh?"

He smiled at her.

"Give me a knockdown to 'er, can't you, Panny?"

"She's my girl!" retorted Pancho fiercely.

"But she won't be when she takes a good look at Red Pig o' the North, which same is me."

"*Little* Red Pig," sneered Pancho.

"What's her name?"

The girl answered for herself, showing she understood Yankee.

"Euarda, *señor*."

"Arda! Say, that's a jim-dandy name. Howdja like to help me out on this buyin' trip? Be my stenog, you know?"

Before she could answer Pancho stepped in front of her to stop the talk. Red grinned and faced el Burlón.

"You're the mayor, hey?"

"Yes—the *alcalde*, the military chief, everything that counts around here."

"Fine! Now I'll tell you what you do. You give out the word that I'm over here with four bags of gold to buy up everything that has been carried and driven and hauled off o' my ranch. Tell 'em I'll just forget it was stole. What I want is to get it back. Get 'em in here tomorrow and when they're all together I'll talk prices."

El Burlón was about to retort resentfully at Red's ordering in this bossy manner when he checked himself. An expression crossed his dusky face that said as plainly as turning a page that he had caught an idea. His eyes quivered. These telltale signs said that he had thought of a scheme—a jest, too, according to his nature—to swindle the pair of American citizens and enrich himself. He put out glad hands.

"*Señor*, I shall do as you suggest. Nothing is too much for strangers in Caliente! I welcome you. The town is yours. Take what you like. And tonight you shall sleep in the strong-walled church with its barred windows. The door shall be locked with a good brass padlock, and a guard with guns shall watch to see that thieves do not steal this gold from you."

THE hospitality of el Burlón, or the *alcalde*, or the military chief, or whatever he called himself or was called, such even as a petty border bandit, was tenacious. He or some of his half-dozen armed henchmen did not allow Red Pig or Romeo out of sight a minute. Nor the strong white bags marked *oro*. But once the two managed a conversation.

"El Burlón," whispered Romeo, "is arranging a jest. He means to get the bags. Pretty soon we'll be men exposed, our throats cut."

"But otherwise O.K."

"You can't get ahead of Mexicans," the old man reiterated.

"Say," said Red Pig pointedly, "that old saw is beginning to scratch. Can't you change your tune?"

"But——"

"Ss-s-st! Here they are. Romy, didja see Pancho's girl? Ain't she the trick, though!"

"Faugh!"

They were escorted to supper with superfluous honor that was farcical. The people were getting a joke and smiling in their hats. They ate brown beans and fresh goat, and canned peaches from the kitchen of the hacienda. Afterward a dance was started on the plaza with music by the phonograph looted from Red Pig's house. Red was there, leading the mouse-colored burro on its string and keeping the same sharp watch on the bags that he had kept on his suitcase at the Kansas City union station when he was *en route* from Missouri. Red accommodatingly picked out the best jazzy records while he kept an eye out for Euarda. Pancho was there, sulking in the shadows, watching for the girl also.

At last she came, appearing in the dancing-area all of a sudden like a gaily garbed moonbeam. Red Pig and Pancho arrived in front of her at the same instant. Red put out his arms to receive her in dancing position. Pancho struck them down.

"You keep away from my girl, you pig!"

Red faced the Mexican with great dignity, being nearly twice as tall.

"Boy," said he, "call me Red Pig of the North respectful like you called my uncle, an' leave off the *little*. And don't call me Johnny. Come on, let's hear you do the honor to your boss!"

"Bah! Johnny! *Little* Red Pig!"

Whereupon Red Pig snatched Pancho up in both his great hands and shook him generously until Pancho's long black hair waved like a frayed flag. Then he set him down as he would have a trunk.

"Now run along, sonny," he admonished, "and don't interfere with a gent when he wants to dance a few times with a lady."

The phonograph was going. Somehow Red and Euarda swayed to the music and swayed into each other's arms. She was a little cuddler. She cuddled as they stepped to the waltz.

"You some jazz kid!" she lisped dreamily. "You lika me?"

"Kid, I'd do anything for you."

"Hones'! Pancho, he ees a good boy."

"What's the idea, Pancho?"

"He good boy. He good foreman, He stay here, no work, he will join el Bu'lón and do bad things—keel, steal. You *sabe?*"

"I getcha, sweetness. You feel sorry for him."

"Sur-r-re! Yes. You give heem hees job as foreman of the hacienda?"

Red hesitated.

"For me, if you lika me," she whispered.

"All right," agreed Red Pig. "Pancho can be foreman if he will come back and act white."

"Oooh!" she cooed and cuddled. "You one good *hombre!* Maybe I help *you* in your trouble tomorrow."

WHEN Red and Romeo found the hay in a corner of the church, late in the night, they set the four bags between them as they stretched out wearily, and the mayor, el Burlón—to do special honor he said—stretched out beside them.

"So your gold will be perfectly safe from the robbers around here," he explained.

"They're a bunch of bad eggs," agreed Red, "these robbers around here."

For further safety the big double front doors had been locked, according to promise, with a heavy padlock, and el Burlón had the key. He would pass it out through the window bars next morning for friends to unlock. Red felt that nothing would happen to the bags this night. He went soundly to sleep.

It was a merry day that dawned. Even early, in the cool of the morning, *paisanos* from the countryside with their generous families began to arrive with, supposedly, things looted from the hacienda of the Red Pig. But to his amused consternation Red saw that people were bringing not only goats and horses and household things that he recognized, but were bringing all sorts of things he had never seen before—old blankets, pans with holes in the bottoms; and horses and goats, and chickens in burlap sacks with their red-combed heads sticking out at breathing-holes; an old spinning-wheel, a broken rifle.

"The people have no money or markets," Romeo explained. "They have hunger for things at the store. They bring their old junk to sell to the foolish young gringo."

"When they find out what we've got to buy with," observed Red, "you and me ought to be half-way home, for the sake o' safety."

The people gathered in the plaza, and there piled their stuff and sat around guarding it zealously. Or held goats and horses near by. The villagers turned out also with a diversity of articles. There was ten times as much as ever had been taken from the hacienda of the Red Pig of the North.

Red's uncle's business in the latter days had been mainly the raising of mules. This had necessitated brood mares. Red and Romeo kept careful watch and found that the twenty mares that had been stolen were all on hand in the little place. They were chiefly what Red wished to get back, though there were a couple of hundred goats and household things.

About mid-forenoon an old *paisano* or countryman came in with a great shaggy Shire stallion, a *caballo padre* that was old and fat with idleness, with long and ragged mane and tail and hoofs split and splayed until with the shaggy hair above them they seemed as large as tubs and sent children scurrying.

"A riding-pony for the gringo!" shouted the people, laughing and gurgling with merriment.

The horse obviously had little value. He had been turned out to grass. Red made a pretense of looking at the teeth—and few were left—the while the crowd sniggered and called.

"A riding-pony for the *little* gringo!"

"For Johnny!"

Red mounted soberly. The shaggy Shire was not depressed by the burden of three hundred and forty-seven pounds or thereabouts. He rode twice around the plaza, his right hand gracefully doffing his hat to the people splitting their sides with laughter, his left hand daintily leading the mouse-colored burro on its string.

When he brought up at one side of the plaza the little throng demanded to know when he would start buying. Red listened to the clamor with misgivings. With so many folks about to watch, the henchmen of the Jester were not keeping close tab. Red and Romeo had had opportunities to converse. They talked now in low voices.

"I've got to start buying," said the young man.

"You speak as if the bags contained gold! Beware, *señor;* the Jester waits, the people laugh behind our backs."

"I've thought of an A-1 trick, Romy. Listen. I'll buy up all the horses. Only about thirty-five or forty."

"But the first man you try to pay," began Romeo, "will——"

"I won't try to pay. I'll give 'em slips of paper with the amount on it. I'll tell them I won't open the bags till I've finished the buying. It will all look regular and O.K. As I bargain for the horses I'll have the *hombres* take them over to you at the north edge of the plaza. You tie their halters together in bunches of six or eight to make 'em easier to handle. Be ready to start when I've got 'em all bought up. Then I'll turn the bags over to the Jester and tell the crowd to go into the church, that they will get their money there. While they're all wound up in that I'll jump on the stallion, and you and me'll hit for home with the horses. These Mexes can't keep up with us on foot, and it'll be hours before they can get horseflesh between their knees."

Old Romeo shook a doleful head. Red did a perfect Mexican shrug.

"Can you suggest something better, old man?" he asked.

"Oh, *señor*," came the lament, "I fear my egging you on to be a man like your uncle and boss the hacienda has got you into a sack from which you can not crawl out."

"Don't work yourself up, Romy. We may get away with it. And anyhow," he added hopefully, "maybe something better will turn up."

"Eef she do not, *señor*, eet ees one grand day for us."

"Let 'er buck. I'm going to start the buying. And get the horses ready, Romeo, because we're going to have to roam!"

RED called for the horses first. He dared the Jester and his men to sell their steeds too, and with alacrity and laughter that Red did not comprehend they sold their saddle mounts to him.

He had talked prices with Romeo, and he drove close bargains to make everything look right. The men accepted the slips of paper readily when he explained that el Burlón would distribute the money presently. Out of the tail of an eye he saw that Romeo was doing his part in bunching the horses together. All was well along the Potomac. Red smiled now and then at Euarda, who seemed watchful and anxious.

Then the smooth flow of horses was interrupted by an old man crowding in with two goats held valiantly by the scruff of the neck. At sight of this all the men and women near by with blankets, pictures, pots and pans, some of them from the hacienda and some not, came crowding in to sell before the money should be gone. Red and the watchful el Burlón were engulfed with the clamoring. In competition with one another the men and women shook their articles in Red's face, plucked at his sleeves. Red was forced to buy willy-nilly.

Household goods, horses, goats, the looking-glass from the ranch, a pig, sacks of poultry, the phonograph—they were passed by him in a joyous parade. He told the people to take them to Romeo to pack on the horses. But presently the people themselves, used to loading beasts of burden, were placing the packs on the horses. They were doing it with laughter that was too bubbling, too full of spirits, too vocal with some great jest at the bottom of it.

Red's glance roved to get a clue. Romeo had been inundated with horses and goods and the accommodating throng. The horses were no longer being tied in groups for a quick getaway. All at once it crossed Red Pig's thought that the people knew what sort of *oro* was in the bags, and his feet seemed actually cold. But no; that could not be. Romeo had declared that nobody in the country now, after years of strife, knew about the old trick on the uncle. Those men who had done that were gone.

At this moment of pessimism the man who owned the great Shire *caballo padre*, or papa horse of the Mexicans, brought the shaggy animal to the block. Red bargained and bought and gave the slip of paper, and on the heels of the purchasing came Euarda, her anxiety apparently given place to the gaiety of the throng.

"Oh, Señor Beeg Man," she made polite request, "will you geeve me one ride upon the giant's pony?"

"Bless your little heart, Arda, yes! Here you are, and up you go."

"No, no! Behind you, *señor*."

Red liked that even better. He threw himself astride and gave her a foot up. She settled sidewise on the broad back behind the American and held on to Red's belt, her fingers feeling warm and gentle.

Red started on another journey around the plaza. The people laughed and cheered and called out merry quips to the girl. Red went doffing and bowing—until Euarda spoke in his ear.

"*Señor*, el Bu'lón have one beeg jest for you."

"Eh? What? The money?"

Red's words were from a puckered throat, but he kept on doffing.

"Speak up, honey."

"You no get your horses and goats, Pancho no have his job back?" she asked.

"No. There wouldn't be any job for him, maybe. Why?"

"Oh, Pancho good boy. I feel ver' sorry for heem."

"Because I got his girl! You're all right, Arda. What's this el Bu'lón is going to do?"

"When the money is distribute——"

"Say, why hasn't he and his bad eggs taken the money themselves? Can you tell me that?"

"El Bu'lón, he gamble. He say he soon get all the money. And if he let the people have it first he please many. But that is only half of it, *señor*."

"What's the other half?"

"When the money is distribute—when you have buy all the theengs, they will steal everything back again, here in the plaza while you and your old man Romeo look on and beg."

"Steal the stuff back as soon as the money is paid! Some dirty low-down trick! I'll say, som-m-me jest! No wonder they've been laughing ever since last night."

"What you do maybe, *señor?*" asked the girl.

"Do? Say, a bunch of crummy Mexes can't get ahead of me."

"What you do?"

"Why, I'll—I'll——"

Red laughed at his own blustering.

"Say, honey, I don't know what I'll do."

"You go away, maybe?"

"Quit? Should say not! When I go I'm going to take you with me. Savvy."

She did not reply.

They were passing the front of the church. Red was pondering. He was not trying to find an outward clue to a way out of the sack, but his roving eye caught sight of something that startled his thought.

"Look at that," he half-whispered to Eurada. "The padlock still on the church door! And the key in it! If we could get the crowd into the church and then lock the door! Oh, baby!"

"Meester, you too smart!" cried his passenger in admiration.

"Will you help me, Arda?"

"Surrre!"

"I'll get the crowd into the church. You lock the door. And Romeo can beat it with the mares."

"What you do, my frien'? They maybe keel you."

"Kill me? I should say not. All the Mexicans in the world couldn't kill me. Come on, kiddo, let's get things started."

AS HE finished the journey back to the block he saw that some of the horses were packed with articles that he had not seen before, that had not been presented to him for buying. This was explained when he observed that three or four persons had pencils and scraps of paper. They were indiscriminately making out bills for him to pay!

Red Pig felt less secure than he had at any time before. These *pelados*, penniless ones, were starved for nice clothes, for food from the store, for ribbons, knick-knacks. They were expecting to get money presently. Their disillusionment would be a cruel thing. Red's heart was sore for them.

In that moment his view of them changed. They were children. He wished that he might help instead of hurt them. Yet his insecurity lay in their very simplicity and unreasoning minds. Their anger would be great in their disappointment.

Then something else occupied his thought for an instant. After all, these people, many of them at least, had stolen from him. And they were only waiting now on the culmination of a great jest at his expense. How much fun they were having in selling him their property, knowing that in a short time they would take it all back while he stood by helpless and friendless in a foreign country.

But even then he would not have hurt them if he could.

Red Pig shoved these thoughts from his mind to grasp others more to the point. He let the girl down. The selling seemed to be over. The crowd said as plainly as looks could say that it was ready for its money now. The noon sun was pouring down. El Burlón wiped his brow and remarked that the shade would be acceptable.

Red, still on the Shire, stooped and took the money bags from the back of the mouse-colored burro standing in the stallion's shade. Then he called to the crowd.

"Listen! Listen! The time to pay has come. Your mayor, el Burlón, will open the bags. Go into the church. All of you. Into the church to present your bills."

Those who understand interpreted for those who did not. There was a concerted rush for the church. Red started on the big horse. Nobody was holding back. Red understood that every person in the village out of bed and able to hobble, and in the countryside also, was there. The prospect of much money was a magnet. El Burlón followed at the horse's heels, keeping a watchful eye now at the crux.

Romeo was the only one to remain back with the horses. Red and el Burlón were the last to enter the church's wide door. As they went in Red's roving glance failed to make out Euarda anywhere.

Red and the Jester elbowed their way through the pack of bodies to the altar. It was higher than the floor and thus offered some advantage. Ringed around the altar rail were el Burlón's six or seven dependable henchmen—his police force, he called them. They were armed with both rifles and pistols, as was the Jester, but these weapons constituted about the entire list of firearms present. Contrary to what his ideas had been, Red had learned that few poor *pelados* had guns. It was the military or semi-military element that was armed.

Red's glance left these to run across the heads of the crowding spectators to the door at the opposite end of the building. And at that instant he saw the door closed from the outside. In his imagination he saw the slender Euarda catch the padlock, heard its click. But that must have been imagination for the room was fifty feet long and the men and women were chattering like a flock of ravens.

It came to him, "suppose the girl is treacherous." He wondered what game she could possibly have. He dismissed the idea. But he realized that he was in the sack sure enough now, with the mouth tied. The barred windows shut off any possibility of escape. Might as well confess his perfidy to these Mexicans and have it all over with, he thought.

He still had the four money bags up in his arms. He set them on the wide altar rail, aligning them neatly as he felt for words to open his talk. Somehow, he speculated, he ought to be able to talk his way out of this. It wouldn't be pleasant to be locked in a strong room with a frenzied mob of simple, unreasoning people.

"Well, well," barked the perspiring Jester, "let's finish. It's hotter here than in a steam-heated room in El Paso."

"Sure, sure," agreed Red. "The finish is at hand."

He begun to untie a knot of one of the money bags, the sweat of agony breaking out on his forehead.

Then there came a sudden hammering on the door, as if the king's bailiffs were there imperiously demanding entrance. It was startling even under the already tense conditions. Then came clamorous shouting in the tones of old Romeo.

"*Señor! Señor!* Are you all right?"

"Well," answered Red with an assumption of cheerfulness, "I'm cooped up with these cutthroats and ready to open the money bags—otherwise O.K."

El Burlón smiled wanly at the levity and watched Red's fingers at the bag. Red delayed the denouement with his slow motions, hoping against hope for something to turn up.

There came a sound of running feet outside. An eager voice was hurled in at the nearest barred window.

"*Señor!*"

The girl! Her head and shoulders appeared above the window sill. Red went striding toward her.

"Aw, leave off the sweethearting," growled the Jester. "Get this money business over with or I'll take the whole collection."

"What is it?" Red flung at the anxious Euarda.

Her lips moved, but he could not hear. He bent close, filling the window completely with his great body. It seemed that that was what she wanted, for her countenance leaped gladly, and she shoved a big revolver into his hands. He saw cartridges in the cylinder.

"I locked the door," she said. "I will unlock it when you call. Be good to poor Pancho," she pleaded.

Even in that instant of stress Red laughed within himself at old Romeo's pessimism—"You can't get ahead of Mexicans!" The baggage smasher from Missouri spun around, the revolver gripped and pointing.

The crowd gasped at its breath. El Burlón grunted in surprize.

"Listen, everybody," Red rumbled mildly, while the black eye of the weapon scanned them all menacingly, "I want to make you a little speech."

THE speech that Red Pig of the North made had to do with disarmament. Romeo assisted. He was let in at the door to collect the arms. Seeing Red Pig in the ascendancy, several of those who had deserted from the feudalistic hacienda set up pleas to be taken back, and Red gave into them.

When the door was unlocked men, women and children belonging to the ranch poured out, flooding Red with offers of help to get the goods and livestock back home.

Most of the Mexicans were left locked securely in the church. It would take them quite a while to dig out. When Red Pig's cavalcade started northward under the hot noon sun everything was left behind except what belonged to him save that he took all horses and firearms to prevent effective pursuit.

But Red Pig did not forget one important act at the last. When the caravan moved off he mounted the great Shire stallion and beckoned to Euarda. She came eagerly enough, a question on her tongue.

"Pancho—" she began.

"Forget him!" snapped Red Pig. "He'll come along if he wants to when he gets out. Here, give me your hand. Hop up. You and me'll be married, honey, as soon as we get home."

She held back in maidenly alarm—as Red believed. He had a way with him where ladies were concerned. He reached down before she could suspect such an intention and seized her wrist, and up she came to her position on the sun-hot back of the big horse. But there was a surprize for Red—she came clawing and spitting like a cat.

In the end he had to hold her astride behind him while he removed his trousers belt and strapped her securely to him. There he let her claw and hammer at his broad back until she grew weary.

As to the cavalcade, Red used generalship. He sent one man and the older children with the goats off to the broken land at one side, where they could pursue their slow way with less likelihood of being seen than if they headed straight out across the plain. With the horses, however, and the adults and small children, he struck straight for the hacienda on the United States side of the international river.

The shadows of the cactus across the sand had not grown long enough to be grotesque when the procession arrived in sight of the mouth of the narrow defile, which would be the last lap of their journey except for the river ford. For the dozenth time Red and Romeo, riding side by side, craned their heads around to see if they were pursued. And this time there were black specks of riders miles away.

Red grinned.

"I'll bet they're all het up," he remarked. "I left the money bags at the church door where they'd find them soon as they dug out."

With a leer at the old man he added—

"Thought you said I couldn't get ahead of the Mexes."

Romeo mumbled and said they'd better whip up.

"No hurry," declared Red. "Once in the defile, they'll never be able to touch us."

The new boss kept unhurriedly on. Euarda reclined against his back sound asleep, her face red from the sun's fire. Red Pig had his left arm twisted back to support her. He would not trot the horse lest the girl be awakened.

When they entered the blue shadows of the defile Romeo again urged greater speed.

"You go ahead," instructed Red, "and hurry the column along. I've got a trick up my sleeve that will give you time to get 'em across the river."

The trick, it developed, was to block the defile with the big horse, his own broad body, and with the girl on behind. The Mexicans could not shoot, if they so desired, without hitting Euarda in all probability, and even the Jester would not dare to take the chance of killing a girl of his own country.

Perhaps the Jester was too badly beaten to pursue. Red could not tell whether he was in the little knot of horsemen, because of the dense shadows, but he made out Pancho for a certainty.

When at last Red emerged from the defile he saw that his mares were across the river and that all the animals not belonging to him were being turned back, according to his orders.

The sun was yet hot on the water when Red and the girl, who had become strangely alert at sight of the Mexicans following behind, forded the stream. Red gave Euarda into the charge of three women, who had come back with their husbands, with instructions that they have her at the house on the hillside within an hour.

"And bring along somebody to marry us good and proper," he told them. "This is where I become a prisoner for life."

He went off singing some foolish improvisation about it being his glorious wedding day.

Red shaved and donned a fresh shirt for his wedding and ate a hearty meal that Romeo prepared. As he devoured the food he talked pleasantly, satisfied with himself.

"Well, Romy, I've showed the Mexes that I'm boss. I've got back my mares and the rest of the property except the goats, and they'll be in early tomorrow. From now on I'm the king bee that buzzes around here. I don't think they'll call me *little* or Johnny any more. Do you?"

Romeo shrugged.

Pretty soon a gabble of voices sounded in front of the house.

"There they are!" said Red, pleased as Punch.

He jumped up and went strutting toward the front room, Romeo on his heels. Together they looked from a window. All the Mexicans who belonged on the place, including Pancho, were there.

"Look what I've done!" triumphed Red Pig. "Brought 'em all back. They want to see me get married."

Red pranced out to the porch.

"Howdy, folks," he greeted. "Red Pig of the North welcomes you home. Come on up here, Arda, and bring on your parson."

A silence fell over the crowd. Everybody looked down their noses, except Euarda, who looked terribly frightened.

"*Señor*," she faltered, "I am married to Pancho, one-half hour ago. You say—you promise me you let him be your foreman."

The silence lasted a moment longer, to be shattered by giggling mirth from Romeo.

"He-he-he!" tittered the old man as if he were glad this American hacienda owner had not married a simple little rural girl. "What did I tell you? You can't get ahead of the Mexicans!"

"Otherwise O.K.," breathed Red feebly.

But he was not to be outdone by a little thing like losing his girl. He went teetering out to her and kissed the blushing bride smackingly upon the nose, and seized Pancho by the hand.

"Congratulations, Panny! I get a foreman outa this anyhow, hey?"

This was a happy turn for the affair to take. The tenseness of the Mexicans let down. Their eyes sparkled with pleasure. In their warm-hearted way they sang out a "veevy."

"*Vive* Johnny! Long life to Johnny!"

Red Pig blushed in confusion at this, at a loss for an answer for the first time. He felt outdone, was really hurt, for it seemed to him that here at the finish these people were making open sport of him, seemed that he had failed. Shrewd old Romeo saw how it was. His mirth was gone. He patted his young friend on the back and whispered words of encouragement.

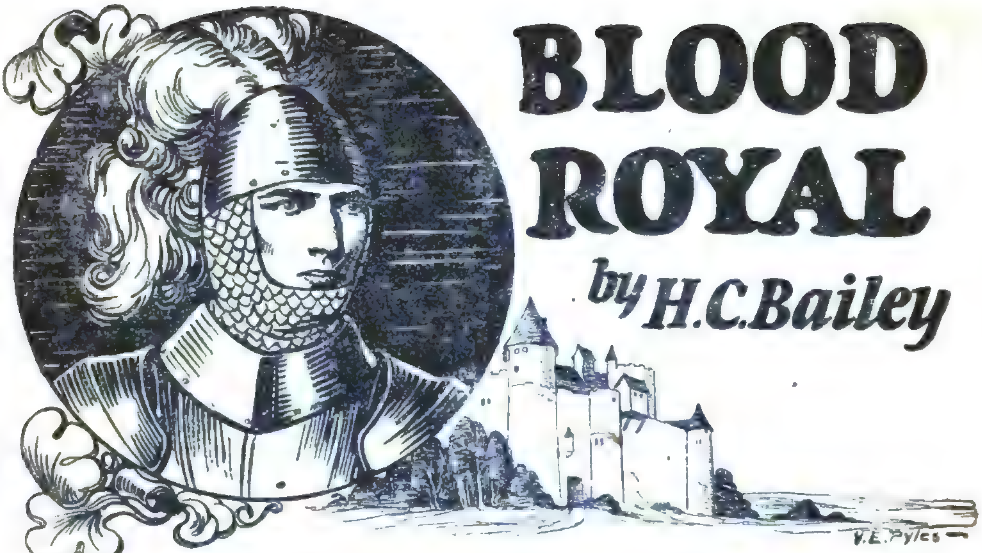
"They use your first name. They like you."

"*Señor*," spoke up Pancho, stepping forward with his hat respectfully in his hand, "we have been bad Mexicans. That was because we had no boss for a while. We wish to come back and live and work on the hacienda as of old. If—if you will permit us, boss."

Red Pig of the North went back up on his front porch, and he was very humble in the face of this humbleness—"Love reflects Love."

"Sure," said he simply. "Stick around. I want that you should."

And in his heart he was quite content.



BLOOD ROYAL

by H. C. Bailey

Author of "The Lord of St. Lo," "The Tale of a Hammer," etc.

SILVAIN the knight and Thibaut the squire took the road to fortune. The boy who was King of France kept court under his sister's hand at Langeais on the Loire, and there went all who sought redress of old wrongs or claimed new rights or had a sword to sell.

"I like it very well, my lord," said Thibaut. "Where thieves are falling out is the place for me. Where men seek justice of a woman and a child is surely the place for you."

"Justice, brother?" Silvain laughed. "God deliver me from justice in this world and the next."

"Alas, my master, I think He will," said Thibaut.

But to that child's court they did not come in many days. For their road took them close upon the frontier of Brittany where a duke reigned who was something mad and nothing of a friend to France.

The apple-trees grew among the cornfields there, long ranks across the stubble ruddy and golden. What first disturbed Silvain, who saw far, was a commotion in the branches. Then in the bare fields people were running, little shapes like chickens running to cover from a hawk. Riding on down the easy hill, he heard a noise of steel; he met men-at-arms damaged and in a hurry.

"You go the wrong way, my children," he said. "Your honor is behind you."

They checked and stared while he rode by; they did not follow him. Where the road wound about to ford a brook in a copse he saw the fight, horses down in the mire and a muddle of men on horseback. He made out in the midst a knight dismounted who stood at bay with one or two guard his back, and fought to die hard.

Silvain put on his helmet and took his lance from Thibaut.

"St. Denis to aid!" he cried, and came down the hill at speed.

But Thibaut looked and turned back.

Reason both had, for the knight was beaten to his knees and scrambling under the horses. Silvain's lance shot into the press, hurled man upon man and flung them down. He let it fall among them as his charge bore him by, then turned his horse and came at them with the sword. They were lightly armored, no more than breast-plate or coat of mail on any man; they could not hold him off but by weight of odds, and he had broken them so that they might not draw together against him.

Away up the hill, "Come again, brothers; come again," Thibaut was calling; "the meat is cooked now."

And the fugitive men-at-arms, slinking back to see, took heart of grace and charged with him and charged men who broke away from them and fled.

Then Silvain sprang down and set that lonely knight on his feet.

"Sir, I pray you forgive me that I came. But indeed you have honor enough."

"Honor the pig's tail," says that knight. "Where the —— are they gone?"

He put up his vizor, showed a fat red face and, dashing sweat from his eyes, looked after the rout. One man was out ahead and drawing away from his fellows in defeat, but they made fast work too, and the laggard men-at-arms were losing them.

"Back into covert," the red face growled, and called off the pursuit with a huntsman's shout and swore.

"But I must not spoil your sport, sir," Silvain cried. "To horse again, and we will beat their covert."

The square old knight looked him over. "Now, who are you that are so ready?"

"I am Silvain de St. Lo."

"A good name to carry." The little eyes were cunning. "And what brought you in, Sir Silvain?"

"Sir, I struck in for a nameless knight who fought at odds."

"By the horns of the ——, I had need of you. You have a right to my name and all of mine. I am Clément de la Narvée. Old red Clément." His eyes twinkled at Silvain. "But what is your work here?"

"I ride to honor and fortune."

The old man laughed.

"Like a landless man. Well, I have been young in my life too. Come, ride to dinner."

"What, sir, break off your hunt? There is light enough for merry work yet."

"The rogue is off over the march. It is Brittany there beyond. We shall make no more of it now. But never fear, old Clément can find a venture for you if you have a mind to it."

He swung himself heavily to the saddle and led off, and he talked much of nothing.

THEY came over the fields to a river winding in glittering pools among sand-banks where the smell of the sea lingered. Before a cluster of low houses a few boats lay in the sand and farther out aground in the shallow water a ship of two masts. What had been a strong castle rose from a knoll above the bank, but its wall was breached and the keep lay in ruins.

"That is English work," said Sir Clément, "when they tried for St. Michel. They harried us; the —— afflict them, they shall pay me yet." And he laughed. "Come on, lad. I have meat on the spit and a bottle in the cellar as poor as I look."

Only one tower of his castle was in living order; but there he made Silvain good cheer enough with mutton from the salt marsh and wild fowl and a heady white wine of Anjou. It was a little room, and they ate alone, sending Messire Thibaut's melancholy dignity to the men-at-arms in the kitchen.

"Who has no hall must live proud," said the old knight, and talked of food and drink. But when they had only wine left, "I will die for it, you are a clever fellow, Silvain," he cried, and his little eyes twinkled. "What is behind your grave face that you ask me nothing?"

"Good faith, sir, I have thought of nothing to ask you but how much of this rare wine a man should drink who would say his prayers after."

Sir Clément pushed the wine-jug over.

"If I had broken a man safe out of a lost fight, I should be asking him how the —— he lost it."

And he made haste to explain. It was his work and the work of his fathers to guard the border. The Bretons were ever hard rogues and of late had grown bold, for they had found a leader. It was an outlaw from England, a Sieur de Richemont, who had gathered a band of masterless men and made wicked work with his forays into France.

"A lean little thing he is, with a sour priest's face. Did you mark him?"

"It was such a man led their flight."

Sir Clément laughed.

"You have him. He does not love the steel. But a restless rogue and full of cunning. No peace on the border while he is loose. I have hunted a cold scent often and never come up with him till this day. The fiend makes the luck for him! He had more men than I counted, and stiff stuff they were; and mine—they are poor hounds that hunt with a poor knight. So the wolf is safe off again to harry us."

Then Silvain said—

"Sir, a man might seek this wolf in his lair."

"And rouse all Brittany?" The old knight shook his head. "By my soul, I ask no better. But that is to make war. And we must keep the king's peace. It is an order from the Constable of St. Michel. Catch the knave o' ——'s name, says he, but no fighting over the border. The —— burn their policies! Peace is a sheep's life, Silvain."

"Sir, a man might go alone," said Silvain.

The old knight struck his fist on the table.

"Mock me; you are wise. Time was, I would have gone and asked no better. But I grow old, Silvain. You have seen me beaten down."

"Oh, sir, I am shamed," Silvain cried out. "You have shown me how a knight should fight without hope, and I am so dull and gross I seem to mock you. Pray you, believe it is not in my heart, which thanks you for a merry venture."

"God's faith, you are young!" The old man stared at him. "Will you go?"

IN THE dawn Silvain and Thibaut rode out from that castle by the river, but Silvain left his armor behind, for he said that he was a Norman horse-dealer taking two chargers to sell in Brittany, and Thibaut his groom.

"But for the love of ——, let me talk for both, as the wife said when her man would go to confession," Thibaut grumbled. "Did you ever sell anything in all your days, my lord?"

"I have had nothing to sell but my life," said Silvain mildly.

Thibaut blinked at him.

"Yes, faith, that is for sale every day."

"What else is it for, brother?"

"Quoth Dan Prodigal when he spent his portion. But there is no more where that came from."

Silvain laughed.

"Courage, brother, I sell mine dear. I will buy honor and fortune with it before all is spent. I do not die a naked man."

They came over the border without adventure and rode on through a peaceful land. There was no sign of the band which had harried Sir Clément. It was hard to find a man to talk with and harder to make him talk. When they found at last a poor village and a poorer tavern the cunning of Thibaut was tried hard and much biting cider poured out before he would hear anything of the Sieur de Richemont. But the master of the house, growing mellow, was brought to confess that he had heard of a lord in the country, an English lord on his travels, who might buy a horse. People said he was gone to the shrine of St. Yves.

"The devil was sick, the devil a saint would be," says Thibaut to his master.

And through the hot afternoon sun they made for the hill of St. Yves, a long ride back toward the border. It took them into moorland of gorse and heather, but the sun was gone and the color, before the great stones on the hill-top, a shrine older than any Christian saint, loomed dark against the sky. Then Silvain dismounted.

"Look to the horses," he said. "I will see what this lord is worth."

Under the hill was a little church and a village. Coming softly through the gloom, Silvain saw firelight and heard a murmur of voices. The Sieur de Richemont's men lay in bivouac about the church. There was no doubt of them, for they spoke both English and French, and talked of their failure to break into France and cursed their luck.

"Here is no happy company. But where is their captain?"

Silvain smiled and lay close.

A small man came out of the priest's house and talked with them. Silvain did not like his voice, which was thin and careful. It had words of condescension for one and another, and as the little man moved among them he came into the firelight and Silvain saw the thin, sour face which had been first when they fled. It praised their loyalty, it promised them that they should try for France again in the morning, and departed. They did not murmur till he was gone and then, though they grumbled, they said no word against the little man. This meekness bewildered Silvain; men who would harry a countryside, men who would fight as they fought, were not likely in this world to choose such a leader.

"Where is he gone then, this pale clerk?"

Silvain stole aside to see. He was gone into the church.

And it was a long while before he came out again. Then slowly he climbed the hill. Silvain made off and stole up on the other side. When he could see the shrine of St. Yves on the top, one flat stone on the ground with a hollow where the saint laid his head, guarded by three great stones erect, there the Sieur de Richemont knelt. But what he was praying Silvain could not tell, for he prayed in English.

"Here is piety," Silvain said. "Well, brother, I also can pray. Let us see who will be heard. A challenge!"

So he knelt too where he stood in the gorse below.

The Sieur de Richemont was first afoot. But as he came down the hillside from the shrine there rose before him a man whose sword sang over his head. The Sieur de Richemont was struck only with the flat of it, but he fell like a dead man. Then Silvain knotted his arms in his own girdle and bound his cloak over his head and carried him away.

When dawn was breaking, two weary horses came again past Sir Clément's watchman on the border and bore three men to his castle.

The old knight ran down to the courtyard unkempt before the first of them was out of the saddle.

"By my body, you are swift and sure, Silvain," he cried, and his eyes goggled at the little man who lay across Thibaut's horse like a sack.

"That I do not know," Silvain said. "God forgive me if I have taken a saint. He has been at prayers all the way."

"When he was not swearing. And he swears like a cat," said Thibaut. "Hark!" For the man had slipped to the ground, and the noise which came out of the cloak was shrill.

"Look if he be your man, sir." Silvain turned away. "I am weary of him, and very empty."

But Sir Clément called to his men-at-arms and carried the prisoner off still muffled and bound.

Then Thibaut, while wearily and groaning he labored for the horses in the ramshackle stable, said:

"It is done and it was well done and it was a bold deed to do. But who gains by it, my lord?"

"We gain honor, brother."

"I think it is the honor of the cat, my lord. When she pulled the chestnuts out of the fire for the monkey to eat. 'Meow,' quoth puss, 'here's nor meat nor milk.' "

"We have done work for France."

" 'By my faith, you have deserved well of Monkeyland,' quoth jackanapes."

Silvain laughed and left him grimacing.

But in the kitchen there was mutton, ham and cider made hot with honey; and, bidding them serve his master, Messire Thibaut licked his black chops and was comforted. On this fare Silvain fed in the little room in the tower till the old knight found him and denounced it and called boisterously for wine and better meat, swearing that they must feast. So fast he talked of larder and cellar, so he plied Silvain, who was a hungry man, that much time was spent before Silvain's gentle voice stole into his jovial noise with—

"I see that the man was your man, sir?"

"—— doubt him, the very rascal." The old knight filled Silvain's cup again. "Ha, you do not miss your man, Silvain. You take your lance and down goes he. I pledge you, lad. Here is a life of merry ventures."

Silvain drank temperately.

"Sir, you are generous. Pray, will you find me another?"

"Oh, lad, I wish my old bones could ride with you. We would make blithe work in the world. But that is for you. I belong to the past. You have all before you, you rogue. And I must stay here and keep the peace of the march till I grow into the ground. Old man's work, lad. There is nothing else here." He poured the wine again. "Ah, never talk of it. To the —— with cares. Good fortune to good swords!"

Silvain drank it discreetly.

"All is well with you now this man is taken?"

"By my body it is," the old knight laughed, "and very well. There is no other knave will trouble me now."

"Sir, I am glad that I have done thus much service," said Silvain gently.

The old man's eyes twinkled.

"Good service it was, I will not deny you."

He fumbled in his gown and pulled out a purse.

"The fellow is worth a price, lad," and he began to tell out gold pieces.

"I pray you, sir, do not think so meanly of me," Silvain cried.

"Fie, lad, I know young knights go poor. And as poor as I am I can pay the man who guards my land."

Silvain looked at the little pile of gold on the table.

"I did not bring in this man for a price. I do not traffic in men's flesh."

"Call it his ransom then, and take it up." The old man thrust at the money and laughed. "Never fear, lad, he is worth that to me behind an iron door."

"You shall forgive me, sir," said Silvain gently. "I went out for honor. Let me have what there is."

"You are young, God save you." The old man laughed again and picked up the money. "Pride is dear, lad."

"By my faith, it costs all I have and more. But I pay as I go and live lightly," Silvain smiled. "Pray you, sir, what is this man's fortune now? Do you hold him to ransom?"

"Ransom my foot! He is an exile, a broken man. Hang him up, he is empty."

"But I would not desire that," said Silvain gently. "And by my faith, Sir Clément, it would not be courtesy to me."

The old man laughed.

"You are a quaint, solemn fellow. Why, man, it was only a curse at him. I am no hangman. I shall take him to St. Michel and let the governor take order with him. He has broken the peace of the march. He is for Estouteville's hand. The iron cage of St. Michel will keep him safe enough."

"I have heard that the Sieur d'Estouteville is a wise and gallant captain," said Silvain.

"Why, man, none nobler in France!" Sir Clément stared.

"I pray you, sir, bring me to him if you can in justice commend me. For it is in my mind that he could send me upon ventures whereof I might win honor and fortune."

The old knight looked cunning.

"The —— doubt you," he muttered, and then he laughed again. "I will take you, lad, with all my heart. By my body, you have earned it." He started up. "Give me leave now. We must sail when the tide turns." And he bustled out, and Silvain went to bed.

IT WAS still before noon when they roused him and rowed him out to that two-masted ship of Sir Clément's. The old knight was on board already and gone down to his cabin, so his men said, offering Silvain another to have his sleep out. But he joined with them to haul on the cable and stayed on deck. The tide was running out fast, and soon they came to the mouth of the river and met broken water. Then Messire Thibaut, sliding across the deck, brought up on Silvain where he stood watching men aloft.

"Hold by me and I will hold by thee, as the hen said to the duck when the flood washed her away," quoth Thibaut.

"I would like well to be there," Silvain said, pointing to a man on the swaying mainyard.

"So would not I," Thibaut grimaced. "I am not greedy. We have our own pleasures, as the vixen said to her cub when he wanted to run with the hunted stag. Pray you, my lord, why did they laugh when they said Sir Clément was gone to his cabin?"

"Why, brother, every man laughs when another is seasick."

"So it is. When Father Noah ran to the side, merry they were in the ark. But is it the sea he hides from, this old knight? I do not like his pig's eyes, I. And they are very merry men on this ship, my lord. When I asked how long we should be making St. Michel, again they laughed. I pray you, where is the jest in that?"

"They saw Messire Thibaut seasick too. Look, man, there is St. Michel already."

Across the bay the pinnacle of the church took the sun, and below it the walls and towers of the castle which grew from the mass of the mount shimmered through a silver haze. Silvain crossed himself and said a prayer to the saint of high places.

"There is the mount and the Marvel," said Thibaut, twisting his eyebrows. "But I have no comfort of it, as the pig said when the butcher drove him past his wallow. For this ship points another way."

Silvain laughed.

"Why, brother, that is the seaman's craft. The sea is a hill to climb zigzag."

But when he found that these seamen did not put their ship about, when they held on northward so long that Mont St. Michel was far away on the port quarter and still ran on by the sandy shore that stretched away beyond Avranches, he sought the captain, a big, bearded Norman.

"When do you think to come to St. Michel, friend?" says he gently.

"I sail by my orders."

The man hunched his shoulder and turned away.

Silvain disturbed Sir Clément in his privacy. That old knight was not sick. A salt herring and white wine were going into him.

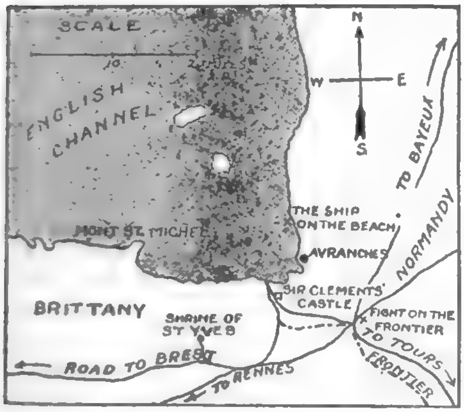
"In good time, lad," he called out. "I have just sent to seek you."

"Sir, we are then of the same mind. For I also desire your company."

"As long as you will," says the old knight heartily.

"Why, there it is. Sir, I fear you are too kind to me. They say that you are taking me not to St. Michel but on a longer voyage."

"And by my body, that is the very thing I had to tell you. When I had this rogue safe aboard, I called him up and told him that I was carrying him to the governor of St. Michel. Then the knave mocked me, saying he was no Frenchman to be under French justice and lie in a French prison, and his English king would not suffer it. The —— be his steward! True it is D'Estouteville is a wary man, and he will not thank me if I bring down English pirates on the Mount. His father had enough of that. So I thought of it again, lad, and it came to my mind this Sieur de Richemont is an outlaw and all his house; and the King of England would be blithe to lay hands on him."



"That is the hunchback," Silvain murmured.

"Aye, Richard Crookback. Then said I, 'English are you, and England shall have you.'"

"Surely it is in the Scripture," said Silvain gently. "'Thou hast appealed unto Cæsar. To Cæsar shalt thou go.'"

"Right Scripture, lad," The old knight rubbed his hands, and his little eyes twinkled. "You have said. So to England go we, and the —— give him joy of it."

"But what joy for us, sir? Richard the Hunchback has no gentle fame."

"Fear not you. King Richard loves well to lay his hands on his enemies. He will pay the price. By my body, Silvain, this falls well for you. I will speak for you; I will tell your tale, and the Crookback loves a bold blade. His own sword won his crown and must keep it. There is a king to serve! Merry ventures, lad."

Silvain looked at the old man gravely.

"By Our Lady, I see a great venture," he said in a low voice. "Sir, my fear is that I am not worthy of it."

"Fear the pig's tail," the old knight chuckled. "I have had a life of fighting, lad, and I never knew a better man to have at my back."

Silvain had to help him empty his bottle.

* * *

IN THE hold upon the stone ballast the Sieur de Richemont sat bound hand and foot to a ring-bolt. Having sought him all over the ship, Silvain came down into the dim light and found him by the murmur of his voice. He was praying, and Silvain joined in the prayer.

The man broke off and opened his eyes and stared at him.

"What would you do more?" he said, quavering.

Silvain finished the prayer and crossed himself. "That I can not tell," he said. "Sir, it is in my mind that I do not know you."

"It is you—it is you who took me at the shrine of St. Yves," the thin voice rose.

"That man am I. What man are you?"

The little man licked his lips. "I am the King of England."

"Then are you much belied. For men say that one Richard the Hunchback is King in England, and you are the Sieur de Richemont, a landless man and a robber."

"Henry of Richmond I am, Henry Tudor, and landless this day, but King of England in the eyes of God. Oh, man, take heed what you do who lay hands upon God's chosen."

"Sir, it is most true that God is my seigneur; but just is He. And the man I took was no king, but a knight that harried the march of France and set his hand upon Sir Clément to beat an old man down by numbers."

"Good fellow, you serve an ill master. He has cheated you to your shame. I have harried no man's land. I was coming into France to take refuge with your king, who is my good friend, when this old knight broke out on me and sought to take me. Oh, friend, when you struck me down in the shrine of St. Yves, you did foul wrong. A blow on holy ground, a blow at your own king's cousin! How shall you clean your soul of sin?"

"Oh, sir, you are too gracious. I pray you think not of my soul but of your poor body, for that has shorter life."

"I lie here your prisoner."

"Good faith, sir, not mine, but Sir Clément's. The ship is his, and the men are his, and he carries you to England to sell you to Richard the Hunchback. What lies before you? That lord has murdered his brother and the children of his brother."

"You say well, good fellow," the thin voice answered steadily. "You have sold me to a butcher. Think how you shall deliver your soul from hell."

"I think for you, my lord. Come, I can bring you arms, and we two can may break upon Sir Clément's men and fight our lives out. There is honor and a knightly end."

"I have a king's life in my hand. I may not cast it away. Look what you may do. There is no honor for you in my death."

"I pray you, my lord—I offer you a knight's death. Will you go on to the death of a sheep at the slaughter?"

"You speak to a king, fellow."

Silvain looked at him long.

"You have chosen," he said. "Alas, my lord, it is the better venture for me, but I am sorry for you in this hour." And he drew his dagger.

The little man closed his eyes and bowed his head and began to pray. But it was not at him that Silvain struck. His dagger went down between the planks, and he turned it and drew it out and struck again till he had made a hole and the sea was coming in.

Then the little man cried out and writhed against the rope and called him mad.

"Peace, peace," said Silvain. "You have no part in this."

And he made his way into the after hold and there wrought upon the timbers at his leisure.

Some while after he came on deck and found Thibaut, who ran at him, tongue out, for news.

"What is the true truth now, my lord?"

Silvain laughed.

"Thus it lies. We are bound for England to sell our souls there. Yet I know not, brother. This ship goes not where men think. For this morning she was going to St. Michel."

He took Thibaut's arm and paced the deck and stopped by the forehatch.

"Hark you, friend, it is as if a poor soul cried below."

And Thibaut listened, and his dark face twisted, for what he heard was not a man's voice, and he looked at the smile of Silvain; and he ran to the captain.

That silent man thrust him aside, still chattering, and rolled to the hatch and listened and called his boatswain. The hatch was opened, and there came up the noise of water and a thin cry. The captain peered down and swore.

"Go rouse Sir Clément out," he said, and lowered a man down in a line and so brought up Richmond wet and shivering. And while he made soundings there a man ran to tell him that the after hold was full of water.

Then Silvain said—

"Come, brother, arm me."

"Now God give you grace!" Thibaut wriggled his brows. "You will drown quick enough without clothes of iron."

"I would die with my armor on," Silvain smiled and looked at the land. "Help me, brother."

"I never loved water in all my days. As the hen said when they boiled her," Thibaut groaned. And, standing aside to let Sir Clément come up, they went down to their arms.

The old knight was hardly roused from his vinous sleep, and when he came blinking and grumbling that they troubled him and saw Richmond, he thrust at the captain and cried out—

"The —— flay you, why have you brought that knave on deck?"

"The wretch was drowning below. Look down; all the ship is awash."

Sir Clément looked and drew back.

"By my body, she is full of water. Oh, villain, what have you done? A good shipmaster, you. I give you a ship sound and stanch, and you break her on the rocks in broad day."

"Here be no rocks." The Norman frowned. "She has had no hurt of me. She is old timber. She has started her seams as she met the sea."

So they quarreled about it, and Henry of Richmond huddled himself together in the sun and licked his thin lips and said no word.

"While you talk, you sink," the Norman

cried at last. And indeed the ship labored heavily. "Enough of this. I must run for the land and beach her. Thank God for a sandy shore."

"There? That is under Avranches."

"What then? Better under Avranches than under water."

"Put back, man; put back."

"Then we swim for it. Let me be, in God's name. I sail this ship."

"The ——'s own sailor!" Sir Clément growled, and called men and bade them stand by Richmond and never leave him, sink or swim.

When Silvain came on deck in his armor, the helm had gone over and the ship was laboring toward the land and the captain telling Sir Clément that he would find the leaks while the tide was out but would not promise to calk them before it was high again, and Sir Clément swore that it would be damnation to linger there and could not be still, so he fretted.

"Good faith, sir, your prisoner brings his own luck with him," Silvain smiled.

"Right, by St. Jacques," the captain cried. "We carry Jonah."

"Jonah my foot! I hold him, sink or swim," the old knight said.

"He is sodden already," Silvain said compassionately. "But I pray you, sir, what broke your ship?"

"Do I know?" The old knight stamped his foot. "Go to the —— and ask him."

"Alas, sir, I trouble you," Silvain smiled.

The ship was nearing land; but with a strong ebb to fight, the captain still kept all her canvas spread, and even so she came in slowly. There was sandy beach before her, glistening far on either side beyond the line of foam; and the sea was calm enough, and the shore sank steeply. To beach her was easy. The bow struck; and as the captain shouted an order to down the great sails, she checked and glided on again and grounded heavily. He flung an anchor out in the bows; and men sprang overside, waist-deep in water, to carry it up the beach.

THE tide falls far on that coast, but the ebb was nearly spent when she grounded, and even at low water she would not be dry. The captain set himself to drag her up the beach, put spars under her stem and had every man hauling on the cable, save the sorry prisoner and his guards. It was heavy work and slow, and while they were about it horsemen rode down to the beach and watched them and rode off.

Then Sir Clément gave tongue. No more pulling and hauling. The seamen must work on her where she lay and work fast. His fellows must stand to arms. They would have all the countryside on them in an hour.

"Why, sir, what should we fear?" Silvain said. "We are Frenchmen in France. We have done no man wrong."

"Oh, fool, we are wrecked; and this is the land of wreckers. You will see them come down on us like crows on a dying sheep."

"But this is not Christian," said Silvain mildly. "This is not kind nor courteous."

"Did ever you find a Christian when you had need of one?" Sir Clément laughed. "By my body, to the weak all men are wolves."

"Alas, my lord, you have had ill fortune in your life," Silvain said gently. "But it is in my mind that I have not lived like a sheep, nor like a sheep shall I die."

Then they built a breastwork of sand before the ship and lay and watched while the seamen labored to get under her, baling and thrusting her over. But soon a throng was seen marching across the meadows, and scouts came on before and hovered and made off, and a flight of arrows was shot. The seamen ran to shelter behind the ship; the men-at-arms lay close in their holes in the sand. Seeing no movement, the band of wreckers came on boldly, and as they drew near broke into a run. When they were close on the breastwork Silvain sprang out upon them and struck down who stood in his way.

"Name of St. Denis! What would you have of us? We be Frenchmen in our own land," he cried. "You break the king's peace."

He won a hearing, for none of them had a mind to venture against his armor of proof and his heavy hand. They were a rabble of archers and countryfolk fighting with short spears and axes and cudgels and with no mail to guard them. They checked and drew off and stared at him.

"What would you have, my brothers?" he cried again. "We bring you no ill. We are Frenchmen and your friends. We would do you no hurt. But if you strike at us, it is blow for blow and no mercy to any man of you all."

Then some one shouted them on with a huntsman's call.

"Loo, loo! In upon him and pull him down!"

They came on again; they were many; they could move lightly in the sand, and Silvain sank where he stood. They surged past him like the tide round a rock and charged the breastwork. The old knight and his men met them sturdily; the seamen came into the fight with spars and hammer and knife, and Silvain, laboring through the sand, clove his way into the midst. Their numbers were not enough to make good their weakness man for man; many were beaten down; the others held off and broke and ran.

Silvain put up his vizor and wiped the sweat from his eyes.

"God's grace! That is over," he said. "I take no pleasure in it. Alas, poor rogues, you were worth a better venture."

And he said a prayer for the souls of the dead.

But the old knight broke in upon him.

"Let be, man. Beasts they are, and like beasts they die. This thing is not overmet. You do not know our Normans. See, the pack gathers again."

"And with a leader. There is one who bears a knight's arms, to his shame. Do you know that blazon, my lord? Martlets red upon gold."

"The —— burn him, I know him not. What does it matter who he is? Every seigneur on the coast makes prey of wrecks. Look, he marshals his archers. Down, men, down." He turned and made his way to Richmond where he sat bound and guarded still. "Content your heart," he grinned. "Here is no rescue for you. I hold you fast."

Now the arrows were shot into the air so that they fell straight and behind the breastwork; and though the archers were not many nor their skill sure, men were struck and slain where they lay. The knight of the martlets rode out to see their fortune and called his men to the charge again. They came down the beach again shouting while still the archers shot over their heads.

"Lie close yet," the old knight said. "Stand fast, Silvain. Rally on him, lads."

A TRUMPET sounded, and Silvain started up. Horsemen were coming over the sand dunes. He saw a banner, azure and or. The knight of the martlets saw it too and turned and put spurs to his horse, and after him ran his men.

Then Silvain shouted:

"You of the red martlets! No knight are you. I cry you coward; I, Silvain de St. Lo."

"Peace, lad, peace," said Sir Clément. "What —— thing is this?"

"He flees from a trumpet and a banner," Silvain said. "This is an evil day."

The old knight looked at that banner, which bore a bolden miter.

"The ——'s own day," he muttered and turned upon Richmond and raised his sword.

Silvain gripped his arm.

"God pardon you, sir," he said gently.

"Let be. I know what I do."

He freed himself and struck, but Silvain's sword took the blow. Silvain sprang in front of him and laid hold of Richmond, hand upon throat, and swung the little man away from his guards and stood across his body.

"Oh sir, this is not friendly," Silvain said. "The man is mine."

"Yours or mine, he will hang us all if he lives."

But Silvain stood on guard.

"The devil burn you, you are mad."

He rushed in, striking fiercely, and as he struck he yelled to his men—

"In on the rogue and stab him."

Silvain had work enough to hold him off, having no mind to make an end of him, for the old knight knew his trade, and he fought to kill though he died.

"Daggers, lads; daggers," he yelled. "Go in."

Silvain won a moment to beat down two as they came upon him from behind, and Thibaut crept up and crouched at his back with dagger and sword. The others who were left alive stood off; and the captain beckoned the seamen about him.

"Let wolf fight wolf," he said. "Stand by the ship." And he watched the horsemen coming over the sands.

But Sir Clément fought the harder, cursing them all till a desperate stroke of his at Silvain's throat was beaten down by a blow that struck the sword from his hand and crashed upon his side and bore him to the ground, and he lay faint and bleeding.

Again the trumpet sounded. The banner of the golden miter was near. The horsemen halted in array, and a knight rode out from among them to the trampled breastwork and the dead.

"What men are you that make war in France?" he said.

Then the captain answered him:

"We are Frenchmen and honest mariners that beach our leaking ship. And here come wreckers fighting us for our ship and our lives."

"If you speak true, you shall have amends."

But Richmond was on his feet.

"Sir, whose knight are you?" he said.

The knight looked at his mean little shape and the dirt upon him and his bound arms and laughed.

"Why, what great lord is here?"

"Sir, I was courteous," the thin voice answered. "Be it as you will. I am the guest on your shore. You bear the banner of Holy Church. I am the King of England."

"God give us counsel!" The knight stared at him. "How are you here then, my lord? And who are these?"

"I came a prisoner, their prisoner, for they are rogues and masterless men." He made in some hurry to the knight. "I claim sanctuary under the banner of the Church."

"Why, my lord, you are safe enough. But how do you say? You are King Richard?"

"Richard Crookback is no king, sir. I am Henry of Richmond, King of England by her law and the will of God."

The knight considered him with wondering eyes.

"My lord, we serve the Lord Bishop of Avranches. He must hear of this. I pray you ride with me. Gather up these fellows, Robert, and bring them on and set a guard on the ship." Richmond began to speak again. "By your leave, by your leave," the knight cried, "we must be gone. The bishop will hear you, my lord, and do justice on you all."

A dismal company made that march. When the sedate discipline of the bishop's men-at-arms riding before and behind and on the flanks quelled the curses on Silvain and the outcry against Sir Clément their company went sullenly as men without hope who would not show fear. The old knight, hardly held in the saddle on a led horse, had no strength nor spirit left. But Silvain, who refused the horse that was offered to his knight's armor, gave his helmet to Thibaut to carry and strode on over the meadows with his fair head flung back, singing softly a Latin hymn.

They climbed the hill of Avranches with its fair prospect of winding river and rich woodland and golden bay and saw afar the tower of St. Michel against the sky of sunset, and Thibaut groaned.

"God help you, my lord, what do you sing?"

"I sing evensong," Silvain smiled. "I give thanks."

"So did the lark before he was put in the pudding."

"Be happy, brother. We have won honor this day."

But Thibaut wriggled his long neck and felt at it.

"The honor of the rope," said he.

The gate of the bishop's castle closed behind them, and they were marched down into the crypt beneath the hall, but to Sir Clément and Silvain was given the honor of a dungeon each.

THE bishop of Avranches was a large, sleek man. He sat in his hall with a priest on either side of him, and when Richmond was brought in by a bowing chamberlain the young knight of the shore came out of the shadow and said:

"My lord, this is he. He declares himself Sir Henry of Richmond who would be King of England."

The bishop gathered his gown about him and stood up, making thereby Richmond very small and mean.

"Sir, in my humble wise I welcome you to the realm of France."

"Do I speak to the Bishop of Avranches?"

"Unworthily I serve that office."

Richmond knelt and asked his blessing.

The bishop raised his hand and gave it in full form, and Richmond crossed himself. The bishop sat down and smoothed his gown over his knees and made little noises to himself like a cat purring.

It was necessary for Richmond to explain himself. He licked his thin lips and began:

"My lord, the arm of God has guarded me this day. Your men were sent to deliver me from outrage and death."

"Alas, my lord, into what perils has the hand of God led you?"

The bishop's voice was low and hoarse.

"It is to make trial of me and to raise up friends for me."

"A pious thought, my son. Surely it shall bring you peace."

"I am as he who fell among thieves and was saved by the good Samaritan." Richmond bowed. The bishop nodded and smiled and made his little noises.

"But I have had foul wrong and at the hands of Frenchmen. This I must tell you, my lord: For the honor of your king, I was coming into France, where I was promised brotherly welcome, when I was assailed by an old knight, one Clément de la Narvée, and hardly escaped back into Brittany. Then he sent after me a young man who spied upon me and took me by stealth while I was at prayers in the shrine of St. Yves and carried me off to Sir Clément's castle. And these two put me on shipboard to take me to England and sell me to the butcher Richard of Gloucester. This was my welcome to France, my lord."

"God forbid that you should say so! Here is sacrilege and treason and the selling of man's blood. What knaves are men!"

"My lord, I desire no vengeance upon them. Let justice be done. Have them before you and hear them. I can not tell. There may be something more to know."

"Their blood be on their own heads," the bishop rumbled. "Surely, they shall not go down to the grave in peace. Hugo!" He beckoned to the young knight. "This Clément—bring him up before us and the youth that took my lord, and the captain of the ship." He bent his big frame in deference. "Please you, my lord, these shall suffice?"

"You speak my own mind. The master must pay for the man; that is justice. I am not greedy for blood."

Silvain came in unarmed, lithe and tall, and he smiled as he came, and after him the old knight shuffled on a servant's arm, and behind him the captain scowled.

Silvain bowed low to the bishop.

"I pray you, my lord, of your grace let this knight sit, for he is a weary man and wounded." And he looked sadly and kindly on the old man's misery.

"And by your hand," Richmond said.

"Good faith, my lord, all is by my hand." Silvain smiled. "And here am I to answer it."

"Who are you that speak so bold?" the bishop rumbled.

"My lord, I am Silvain de St. Lo, and I ride to win honor and fortune."

"You bear a good rebel's name."

"My father and King Louis stand at the judgment seat of God. It is not for my father you need fear, my lord."

"Why, here is one who will teach me all that I must do. I pray you, say on, say on."

"My lord, you spoke against a dead man who was my father," Silvain said gently. "Nor he nor any other has blame of this matter but me only. This venture is mine. As I came into the marches of Brittany I heard of one who was King of England and a wanderer. And it seemed to me a venture of renown to capture this lord and carry him off. Therefore I rode into Brittany and took him and was carrying him even into his own England, and these others have no part in it."

"By St. Jacques, I know nothing of him who he is till this hour," the captain said. "I am a seaman."

Sir Clément blinked his little eyes at Silvain and groaned and hung his head.

The bishop turned heavily to Richmond. "Here is our knave, and shameless he is."

"There is more in it than this, my lord," Richmond said. "Let us put the others to the question."

"What more? Guilty is his plea. *Habemus confitentem reum.* We have the rogue confessed." The bishop smiled and made his little grunting, purring noises. "Away with them, Hugo, away."

The bishop preened himself like the good official who sees his way to please every one.

And Hugo, who had not learnt to love his Englishman, marched them off while Richmond was protesting—

"This is no way to learn the truth of it, my lord."

"Alas, that you should say so," the bishop rumbled. "For I have done the king's justice on Frenchmen many a year in this poor way of mine. Nay, my lord, you shall have all justice. What punishment do you ask for this man who delivers himself into my hand?"

"Nay, I ask none." Richmond bit his lip.

"Now you speak like a king, my lord," the bishop murmured.

"But this case is not tried. It is that old rogue Clément who stands behind; he is guilty, he and his. He is hired by Richard of Gloucester. There is a damnable plot in France against me, and he is the master of it. Search it out, my lord, if you would serve me."

The bishop opened his eyes wide.

"Alas, my lord, I am an old, simple man.

I pray you help me. How shall it serve you to make a great noise in the world that Richard of England can raise up enemies against you where he will? For I can not tell. Or how shall it win you friends in France if we hang Frenchmen for your sake? Or how shall it make you strong in England to show the King of France fierce in your cause? I do not understand these things."

"God forbid that I should be a man of blood," said Richmond. "Blessed are the merciful." And he crossed himself. The bishop made his little purring noises. "I am in your hands, my lord."

"This young one who carries his head so high," the bishop rumbled. "I wonder what is the truth of him."

"He is a wild, wayward fellow," Richmond said quickly. "He goes to my heart." The thin lips smiled. "I own I forgive him most easily. My lord, let me carry him your forgiveness too."

The bishop sighed the satisfaction of the official who has kept an ugly scandal quiet.

"It is your pleasure," the bishop said, and when he was gone turned to the priest on his right hand. "Now which is the deepest liar of all these?" he rumbled.

WHERE he lay in the gloom of a cell underground Silvain saw torchlight. The torches were thrust into iron rings upon the wall; the warders made way for Richmond to come in and closed the door upon them.

"We are met again, friend." The thin lips smiled. "And you lie prisoner now."

"Indeed, it was I who changed our places," Silvain said gently. "I am content this night."

"But your life is mine."

"I pray you, my lord, is there anything I have done which makes you think I fear death?"

"Oh, you are a bold fellow. You care nothing for men's lives. But why did you save mine?"

Silvain stood up and made him a bow.

"My lord, I did not know that you knew it."

"Why did you save me?" Richmond said again.

"I had done you a wrong. Speak true, my lord, is that wrong made right?"

"I have no malice against you. You were beguiled. But why do you take the blame now? Let him suffer who cheated you, and you may go free."

"My lord, I do not like your counsel."

"You are a wild heart, Silvain, and bold. I have honor for you."

"By my faith, this is new," said Silvain gently.

"You need but a good cause and you shall do nobly. Here is a king's service. Come, ride with me. I have work for a loyal sword to guard me. God has chosen me for a noble task, and who serves me well shall rise high."

Silvain looked at him long.

"I do not doubt of it, my lord," he said. "I thank you. I must go my own way."

"Here is pride!" Richmond laughed. "I pray you, most noble, what irks you in me?"

"Can you not guess, my lord?" Silvain said gently. "We have proved each other, you and I."

"And you fear that I shall fail?"

"No, my lord. I fear that you will conquer."

They stood a moment eye to eye. Then Richmond called to the warders:

"Take the torches and light me, good fellows. Here is one who loves the dark."

Afterward there came to Silvain men who took him away into the hall and brought him food and wine. And when he had made his supper, a priest drew aside the curtain and beckoned him and led him to the room where the bishop paced, reading a book bound in silver. Silvain heard a murmur of Latin which was not a prayer; something about a child plucking apples in an orchard. The bishop stopped and looked over his book and sat down.

"You make me much trouble, my son," he rumbled. "What is the truth of you?"

"My lord, this king knows all."

The bishop made his little noises.

"You are not courteous to an old man. Even I know something, Silvain. But it is not all that I am told, nor only what I am told. You took him for that old rogue, you delivered him from that old rogue; and you say that the plot to sell him to his death was yours. What man are you?"

"Good faith, my lord, I have done as I could and I have no shame in it all."

"I can not tell what you have or what you seek. You saved him, you win upon him, here is a king to your friend and he bids you follow him to fortune and you send him angry away. What would you have in this world?"

"So am I made; I must choose my own life. And I see no honor with him."

"That is lightly judged, Silvain. He is subtle and strong. When his hour comes I think he will not fail."

"And so I think, my lord. It is why I can not follow him."

The bishop smoothed his gown.

"You who offered yourself to death if he might live."

"God forgive me, if his life shall hurt poor men. But if I let him die, I was shamed. I pray you, my lord, do you condemn me?"

"Who, I?" The bishop held up his hands. "I am of this world." And he let his hands fall and bowed his head and spoke low—

> "He saved others, himself he can not save.

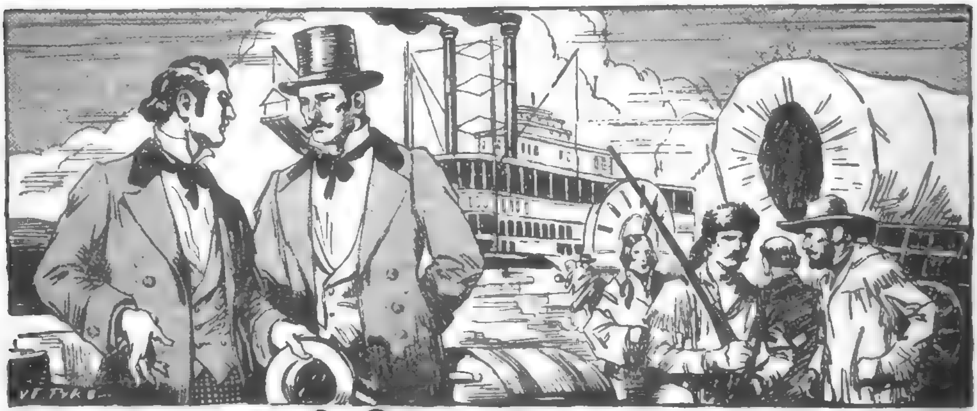
"God help you, Silvain, you will live a poor man all your days."

Silvain flung back his head.

"That I do not fear, my lord," he said. "I shall win fortune with my life."

The bishop made his little purring noises.

"Remember me when you are come into your kingdom," he said.



Rifle Rule

A FIVE-PART STORY ~ PART I

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "The Long Knives," "Old Misery," etc.

CHAPTER I

DANGEROUS LODGINGS

A FAIR day and a May day, with the sun shining mid-Summer warmth on the Missouri border and the gracious Kansas country in this year of 1856. The proud purple spikes of the foxglove, with much flaunting of white and lilac flowers, gladdened the roadside. The sweet scent of rose-colored verbenas mingled with the aroma of roses and pinks in perfuming the soft breeze. Overhead hung a sky as blue as the ocean.

But heavily booted, rough-riding men saw nothing of the gracious undulating prairies, the fair round mounds forming noble amphitheaters, nor the noble timberlands along the many waterways; no more than they took note of an occasional Indian grave, marked by skulls of horse and dog.

From the thickly wooded Missouri shore came border ruffians, proud of their name, to meddle with the affairs of the new territory and to engage in many a foray with other meddlers who were to be known as "jayhawkers" and "red-legs." It was a brutal, blustering border, although nature

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had turned it out as sweet a land as the eye could gaze upon. Over the road cutting across Iowa and the immense, unsettled stretches of Nebraska came plodding emigrant trains from far northern States. From the Mississippi States, and even more distant sections came southern settlers, also intent on developing this new empire.

And the homeseekers, whether from north or south, were impeded and often discouraged by the ceaseless galloping back and forth of armed bands of horsemen. Kansas smiled impartially on the newcomers, while her roving red children jealously regarded this sudden immigration and asked their medicine-men to vision the future and learn if still another white road was to be added to the Arkansas and Oregon trails.

Nature had done her utmost to make the realm attractive and desirable; and yet the territory lacked one thing to be a homemaker's paradise. There was neither law nor order, although the words were often in the mouths of bearded men who looted and killed. Many of those who rode and fought were young men, hot-headed and hungry for adventure and excitement. Because of climate and other conditions Kansas was not a suitable country for enslaved labor, and few were the southern settlers who brought their human chattels there; and few were the reckless riders seeking to impose the institution on the territory who ever had owned a fellow-creature.

Now that the Missouri Compromise had been revoked and Squatter Sovereignty was to decide whether or no the traffic was to be extended north of 36°30′ both sections of the country organized and entered the race to furnish settlers. Long wagon-trains and deeply laden boats hurried to the border, and yet it was not the *bona fide* home-makers who were disrupting the land with lawlessness and disorder; rather it was those outsiders, who owned little if any property, arrayed against those outsiders who would pre-empt little if any land. And over the rolling prairies and through the virgin forests the swift-riding men swooped down on lonely cabin or isolated town; and the red men heard the news and were glad and hoped the white race was about to exterminate itself.

For reasons best known to himself Hale Watt quietly slipped ashore from the *Pole Star* at Lexington and took to horse; and this despite the fact his passage was paid through to Leavenworth. He avoided the river-towns and went much out of his way over rough and unfrequented roads, and spared his animal none in riding toward the border. The weather was unusually warm even for late May, and Watt appeared to be a young man well-indulged by fortune and used to the smooth side of life. Yet through the dust and the heat, with occasional pauses for coarse food at some cabin, he pressed on as if his business were very important.

His haste did not make him noticeable, for there was much wild riding between State and territory, and few were the border cabins that did not at night hear the rush of clattering hoofs, or in the sunlight see the approaching clouds of dust announcing the coming of impetuous horsemen. Those cabin-dwellers who saw Watt spur by, or watched him as he halted to snatch a few mouthfuls of meat and bread, limited him to one of two classifications: He was pursuing some one, or else fleeing from some one. A large number of men along the western edge of Missouri and throughout the eastern portion of the territory were alternating between flight and pursuit. The fact that Watt rode alone indicated flight.

No man unbarred his door at night unless he knew the voice of his visitor. Few men permitted curiosity to conquer prudence and prompt the asking of questions. After Watt had passed only two queries were voiced by the wayside family:

"Who's after him?" Or, "Who's he chasing?"

Late in the afternoon Watt struck into Kansas City road some two miles from the river. He reined in and weighed the advisability of riding north and resuming boat travel. The electric telegraph had been extended as far as Liberty and Independence and he was well west of these points. He was almost midway between Kansas City and Westport, the latter the headquarters for border ruffians and still fattening on the plains trade. The heat and the dust and the coarse meals inclined him strongly to return to the river; caution urged him to stick to the horse and enter the territory through Westport.

While he was hesitating he heard the rattle of wheels down the road and the bawling of deep voices in an attempt at song. He rode behind a screen of green briers. The lumbering vehicle came into sight. It was the Westport stage bound for Kansas City; and the dust thrown up by the wheels and the hoofs of the horses could not conceal the roughly dressed, unshaven, unwashed passengers; nor the big sign painted on the side of the coach—

BORDER RUFFIAN

"They're proud of that name," mumbled Watt as he entered the road and galloped toward Westport.

While he was yet some distance from the border town darkness obscured the way and his horse stumbled in a deep rut and went hopelessly lame. Softly cursing his ill luck, for his stock of patience under the most favorable circumstances was small, he dismounted and led the animal. His progress was very slow. The sound of a fiddle, playing "Hell on the Wabash," brought him to a halt. He had now to enter Westport afoot and tarry there until he could buy a horse. He looked eagerly around to locate the source of the sprightly dance music, thinking to negotiate for another mount. At last his roving gaze caught the twinkling of a light in a grove of oak and some distance back from the highway. He advanced until he came to a rough road, formed by two deep ruts, turning into the growth. His feet found the ground between the ruts worn down by horsemen. Dogs set up a loud baying but none raced forward to meet him. Then something did move in a clump of hazel bushes near the road, and he halted and peremptorily called out—

"Who's there?"

"Dat yo', Marse Kinny?" quavered a frightened voice.

"No. Step out here, boy, and be spry about it."

The bushes rustled and a figure furtively drew closer.

"What place is this? And can I get a horse here?" asked Watt.

"Yo' ain't from dese parts, Marse Stranger?"

"No. Answer my questions. Can I buy a horse here?"

"Yo' don't happen know Marse Kinny, er Marse Agger?"

"——! No! I want a horse. Mine's gone lame."

"Den jes' turn him loose en' hoof it. Go 'way! Go 'way, quick!" This in a tremulous whisper.

"Too tired to do anything quick," grumbled Watt. "I must have a horse, or stay here tonight. Who lives up there?"

The fiddle shifted over to "Arkansas Traveler." The dogs continued their clamor. There was intense fear in the colored man's voice as he warned:

"Yo' don' want nuthin of dis place, Marse Stranger. Yo' wanter mizzle. Go 'way! Ol' 'Crow' Agger's in dere!"

Watt was impressed by the man's earnestness; yet experience had taught him to make allowance for exaggeration. Helpless and down-trodden the colored man would see death in any cowardly white bully.

"Who's Crow Agger? Sounds like a bird."

With a catching intake of the breath the man whispered: "He's de ——! He kill ol' Pomp if he know I say it. Go 'way, Marse Stranger." And he began backing into the bushes.

The fiddle ceased its rollicking music. Watt's horse all but collapsed in the rough way. The clamoring of the dogs had secured the attention of the inmates of the rambling old house among the oaks. A parallelogram of light showed in the darkness at the end of the rutted road, and the dark silhouette in the middle of it would be a man standing in a doorway.

"Who's that down there a-troublin' these dawgs?" fiercely demanded a voice.

"A traveler in need of a fresh horse, or a night's shelter."

"Come up here where I can take a squint at you, or I'll shoot."

"I'm coming. Save your powder," called back Watt; and he slowly led his limping horse toward the house. As he drew near and halted to take his carpetbag from the saddle the door was all but shut, and a gun barrel rasped through the narrow opening, and the man was threatening:

"Stand right where you be, stranger. How many men's behind you?"

"I'm alone. Horse gave out. I want to buy, or hire another."

"We ain't got no hosses to sell."

"Then I want something to eat, and a place to sleep."

While the man on guard hesitated another voice warned—

"May be a game of ol' Brown's."

"I've got him covered," assured the man

at the door. "First move he makes I'll make wolf-bait outer him."

"Either put down that —— gun and let me walk away, or else open the door and let me in," wrathfully called out Watt.

"You're a pack of fools," croaked a third voice. "What would old Brown be doing on this side the line. He's alone. Let him come in."

The door swung open and Watt advanced. He was met at the threshold by a man holding a long rifle. This fellow called loudly and after a minute a figure rounded the end of the house. It was the man who had warned Watt down the road. He took the bridle of the horse to lead him away and in doing so his hand pressed for a second against Watt's arm as a last signal for him to retreat. But the traveler now was committed to the venture and displayed no hesitancy in passing by the man and entering into the dim light of a large room.

The room was low of ceiling and stained almost black with smoke. The floor had a decided slope. It had the atmosphere of having been long deserted. That it had once served as the barroom of a tavern was suggested by the short counter with shelves back of it. There were no bottles, nor jugs upon it now, however.

Five men sat with their chairs tipped back against the discolored wall, and none was in range of a window. A glance at the heavy boots, the coarse clothing, the disheveled appearance of hair and beards, the belts bristling with weapons, told Watt he was in rough company. There was no greeting from the men; each stared at him curiously. From the shadows at the end of the room several large dogs bounded forward to investigate the stranger.

"Stand still!" commanded the croaking voice of the man in the corner.

Watt remained motionless while the fierce brutes sniffed and growled about him. The ordeal was affecting his nerves when the man in the corner remarked—

"They'll know you again, stranger."

And with a sharp command he sent the dogs back to the shadows, their tails between their legs.

In front of the man in the corner stood a five-gallon jug that radiated the aroma of Bourbon, or Monongahela. Watt picked out this man as the leader of the group, and told him—

"I want to get a horse."

"Hosses are worth gold," was the harsh reply.

"I can pay a reasonable price—in gold."

"We ain't no hosses to sell. Just enough for ourselves."

Watt tossed his carpetbag into an empty chair. It gave forth a clinking sound, and the men against the wall stared at it wolfishly. Watt made a closer scrutiny of the leader and observed his amazing shock of black hair and the bristling black whiskers. The eyes were small and shiny black.

"Is this a tavern?" asked Watt.

"No." The fellow's eyes were curiously like a bird's.

"I heard music. I knew company was here. My horse went lame and I'm too tired to walk to Westport. If I can't buy a horse I want to buy shelter and food."

"You've said all that afore," reminded the man in his husky, croaking voice.

With a display of temper Watt demanded: "If you're not running this place, who is? I want to ask him if I can pay for lodging and food."

The undersized man stared at him thoughtfully and noted the empty belt and the absence of a knife-haft at the top of the trim boots; and from the side of his mouth said—

"Stranger round these parts, ain't he, Snipe?"

"Dead right. A stranger," answered a fellow with extremely long legs and a small head.

The leader turned to Watt and informed him:

"My name's Agger. Crow Agger. Reckon you've heard that name." And he waited expectantly for some show of recognition.

Watt shook his head and displayed no interest. Agger's voice was more truculent, for his pride was hurt, as he asked:

"What's your name? And where you from anyway? And where you going? You look like a dandy in them clothes and boots."

"If I gave my name I might lie. I came here from Kentucky. I'm going to Kansas."

And he pushed the carpetbag on to the floor and seated himself in the chair.

"Your name's your own. Keep it, if you want," growled Agger. "But these are dangerous times. Are you right on the hemp, and sound on the goose?"

"Meaning, am I against stealing niggers;

or if I'm an Abolitionist. I'm right on both hemp and the goose."

"Then where's the hemp you oughter be wearing in that slick coat of yours?"

"Where's yours?" countered Watt, for the man's buttonhole held no streamer of Missouri hemp.

Agger swung one leg over the other, so as to bring the handle of a bowie-knife, protruding from a bootleg, within reach of a skinny, clawlike hand. On Watt's right sounded the ominous click of a revolver being cocked. Agger said—

"When I strike Westport I'll wear the hemp."

"So shall I," said Watt, never removing his eyes from the leader.

"Looks to me, Crow, like he was a —— Ab'litionist," spoke up the man with the cocked revolver.

"Then you've got mighty poor eyes," retorted Watt. "Do I look like a northern man?" He did not; he typed the aristocracy of the South.

"Looks to me, Crow, like he'd been kicked out along of loving Yankees," persisted the man with the drawn revolver.

"How many boys do you men, altogether, own?" asked Watt, his fiery temper beginning to get the better of his judgment. "I don't need them, I own so many; but I can buy all you have."

Four chairs tipped forward to rest squarely on the floor. Agger darted a restraining glance down the line, and lowered the leg supporting the knife. To Watt he said:

"You talk mighty high'n tall. Talk's as dangerous as 'tis cheap these times. You blow in out of the night needing a shake-down and victuals, and talk brash."

"I own a plantation in Mississippi. I came to Kentucky in a hurry. I've come here in a hurry. I'm sound on the goose."

Agger eyed him cunningly and again took account of the coat and its velvet collar, of the fine if stained linen, of the patent-leather boots.

"Names don't cut much figger with us," he said, speaking in a less hostile tone.

The chairs went back against the wall.

"That's why we ain't keen to know yours. It's plain you come up here in a hurry, but we don't nose into any one's business. Snipe Kinny, you have the boy fix up a shake-down for the stranger and set out some of that corned beef and hominy. Stranger, pitch into the jug if you feel lickerish. I've got business in Westport. If I can pick up a hoss for you I'll fetch it back. Better all turn in and not wait for me."

He rose and called to the dogs.

No one spoke until after Agger and his fierce escort had passed out into the night. Then a man remarked—

"Licker in that jug is best that ever come out of Kansas, mister."

Watt shifted his chair and glanced curiously at the four men; then darted a glance at the man in the hall, standing at the door with his long rifle, as if acting sentinel.

"Who owns this place?"

Snipe Kinny raised his head and bellowed orders to the invisible servant; and then replied:

"Crow Agger seems to have as good title as any one to it. Leastwise, we ain't seen no claim-jumpers round here."

His companions smiled grimly. The man in the hall chuckled audibly.

"I'm simply trying to find out whom I shall pay for my lodgings and food," patiently reiterated Watt.

"If Crow Agger feels he has any damage to collect he'll let you know how much you're being taxed," assured Kinny.

Again the men smiled sardonically in their beards.

Watt was beginning to find something sinister in the men's steady gaze and brevity of speech. The colored man's warning had prepared him to find a blatant tavern bully, who could be put in his place. But these men even controlled their tongues; and it was the time of vociferous bluster and dire threats couched in extravagant hyperbole. Watt knew that men of their type were usually curious and garrulous. Tiring of attempting conversation he tilted back his head until his long, sleek hair fell over the velvet collar and he stared at the begrimed ceiling. The supporting timbers, hand-hewed, sagged as did those under the floor. One side of the structure had settled. It must be very old, Watt decided. Next he fell to wondering how many tragedies the place had witnessed. Suddenly he was wishing himself well out of it and on the road to Westport.

Finally deciding the traveler would make no more talk unless prompted Kinny took the initiative, and inquired—

"You say you're from Kentucky?"

"I *am* from Kentucky last."

"Own quite a parcel of boys?"

"Lots of them."

"How many?"

"Don't know. Six hundred, and rising."

"Who's your head overseer?"

"I haven't said. What the —— do you mean by cross-examining me?"

And the head came forward so the dark eyes could stare into the shriveled face of Kinny.

"Your story don't hang together," growled Kinny. "You're a stranger in these parts. You say you own boys in Mississippi, but that you come from Kentucky."

"Anything you don't like about my talk you can leave. Your boss didn't seem to be very curious. Now I'm through answering questions."

"You'll do well to answer mighty pert when a Reg'later puts a question," spoke up the man at the door.

"You, Bodge, keep shut!" growled Kinny.

The revelation was no surprize to Watt, however. From the moment he entered the house he had suspected he had to do with lawless men. Down the river as far as New Orleans stories were told about the "Regulators," as various lawless bands of robbers and assassins called themselves Sometimes they carried on their nefarious business under the guise of being territorial militia, or a *posse comitatus* serving the United States marshal. But more often they depended upon the disappearance of those likely to turn up as witnesses against them.

The silence in the room continued unbroken until the servant entered through the back door and timorously announced—

"Snack's on de table, sah."

Kinny lifted his head and set the man to trembling by harshly commanding:

"Fetch a light and put it on the table. Fetch the gen'l'man's supper in here. What you mean by setting out supper in one of them mis'rable back rooms?"

"Yes, sah!" hastily cried the servant ducking his head and scraping a foot.

And he hurried away to correct the fault

Watt showed no interest, but resumed staring, through half-closed eyes, at the grimy ceiling. Now he was confident he had walked into a trap. The man called Kinny did not intend he should have a chance to bolt. The servant brought in the corned beef, hominy and a cold pone, and fussed with the candle. Watt went down the room and seated himself so as to be facing the men. His carpet-bag remained on the floor and he was curious to note if any of the men would display an interest in it. The men remained motionless. The corned beef and hominy were good and Watt ate heartily, but waved aside the jug of liquor the servant brought in. The fellow was standing between him and the men and was persistent in serving him; and as he leaned forward and poured a glass half-full he frantically whispered:

"Go 'way! Out de winder."

Then he was scuttling through the dark doorway to the rear of the house.

Watt made a pretense of drinking, finished the food and returned to his chair. Kinny lazily asked—

"Bound for over the border, eh?"

"Going in tomorrow," Watt amiably replied. "Some say the land is no good. Others say the soil is all a planter can ask for."

"It's good soil for them that's right on the hemp," slowly assured Kinny. "Going to send for some of your boys?"

Watt laughed.

"Send for hands before even a shake-cabin is up? Don't you know it's something of a job to move a large number of field-hands into a new country? If the Winters are as cold as some tell I'd have to hire white men to cut wood so I could keep my boys alive."

"Kansas won't be no free State," growled Kinny. "Not if it snows and freezes every day in the year. Which it never comes anywhere near doing."

"I should lose my interest in it if I believed it was going to be a free State. Yet I hear quite a sprinkling of northern settlers are going in."

"There won't be so many after today," tersely informed Kinny.

His companions laughed grimly.

"Why?"

"Oh, they've sorter been discouraged today, we're thinking. Just remember the twenty-first of May."

"I will. Now how about the climate?"

"Stock find their own feed outdoors all Winter. Not more'n one or two light snows. Don't amount to nothing."

"Some reports have come down the river that the hands don't do well up here."

"Well," drawled Kinny, "if they don't

fill up the country it'll go back to the Injuns. For after today free Staters are going to be mortally discouraged."

"You talk in riddles. But I'll know what you mean when I reach Westport tomorrow morning."

"Every man should be a heap wiser every morning," remarked Kinny.

"Why don't we have some music? I heard a fiddle when I was down the road."

"Bodge was playing a tune. Boss had enough of it."

"The sound of a fiddle carries far," carelessly remarked Watt.

And he rose and stepped to one of the side windows. Instantly every chair softly hit its front legs on the floor as if its occupant were uneasy. Kinny warned:

"Better come back here. There's too much careless shooting round these parts for a man to go a-standing at lighted winders."

"No one can sneak up here so long as Mr. Agger and his dogs are outside," lightly reminded Watt.

"But he ain't outside. He's gone to Westport. Didn't you hear him say he might git you a hoss?" growled Kinny.

"I remember now," said Watt.

Already his attention was focused on a bobbing light beyond some out-houses. As the light moved he secured glimpses of horses. They carried no saddles and were hitched in a line to a picket rope, and he estimated their number to be a score or more. And yet the gang had none to sell!

"You'd better come back from that winder," insisted Kinny.

"Oh, I'm not frightened by any prowlers," assured Watt.

"Come 'way from that winder!" bellowed Kinny.

"Why, if you make it a point, of course."

And Watt walked back to his chair.

Less violently Kinny continued—

"Even if you ain't afraid from a bullet the boys don't want any lead coaxed in here."

"Of course not. I should have been more thoughtful. But I saw a light moving and was wondering if Mr. Agger had had time to return from Westport."

"Ain't had time to git there yet. You saw one of the boys looking after our critters. Boss will be late in gitting back. You can turn in any time you want to."

"Thanks. I'll turn in now," readily replied Watt.

As he picked up the carpetbag it hit against the chair and for the second time gave out a clinking sound. For the second time the men against the wall darted quick glances at each other, and Kinny's nostrils pinched in. Then Bodge simulated sleepiness, yawned extravagantly and muttered:

"Feel sorter tired myself. Dawg-gone if I don't go to bed."

Kinny whistled sharply and the colored man appeared on the run and advanced down the room.

"Gen'l'man going to bed, boy. Look after him smart, boy," ordered Kinny.

The servant's face looked gray in the candle-light. Watt motioned him to lead the way and insisted on carrying the carpetbag. Bodge secured a candle, and, continuing his yawning, walked behind Watt, talking at random. Watt suspected the fellow's loquacity was purposed to prevent any questions being put to the servant. They clattered up the bare stairs, with Watt's hand finding the dust thick on the balustrade railing. They walked down a musty smelling hall and into a room that would have been close and musty if not for several broken panes.

"Make a light, boy, and then hustle down and see what Mr. Kinny's a-wanting," bruskly ordered Bodge.

The servant's light disclosed a hastily prepared bed of blankets and a corn-husk mattress. There was one chair, and as it was not covered with dust Watt knew it had been brought recently from the kitchen. The servant lighted a candle on the window-sill, and with a despairing glance at Watt shuffled down the hall. Bodge remained in the doorway, yawning and talking, until the receding steps began descending the stairs. Then he brought his rambling remarks to an end by saying:

"I'd say you was fixed all right. We're rough, homespun sort of critters in these parts, but we never turn a stranger away. The boy'll call you early. Agger'll prob'ly fetch back a hoss for you. Don't want to buy a good gun, do you?" And he glanced at the empty belt.

"Why, yes. I'd planned to get one in Westport. But if you'll part with yours I'll be glad to buy it."

Bodge's hand dropped caressingly to the navy on his hip, and he shook his head and declared:

"Never'd sell Old Reliable. No, sir! But one of the men has a extry one you can dicker for in the morning. I'd spoke of it downstairs, but 'lowed you was heeled. Most men are in these parts, where we have to fight so hard to keep law'n order from being busted to——"

"Mine was stolen on the boat at Lexington. Didn't miss it till I'd come ashore."

"We'll fix you out in the morning," promised Bodge; and with a duck of his head and gruff "good night" he took his candle up the hall.

The instant he was away from the door Watt pulled off his boots and dropped on his hands and knees at the threshold and peered after the man. Bodge walked heavily and made much noise in opening a door and closing it. Only he remained outside. Having, as he believed, created the impression he had retired to his room he walked softly along the hall to where it turned at right angles and followed through the ell of the building. Waiting until the man had disappeared around the corner Watt reached under his left arm and pulled out a Colt's pocket revolver, caliber thirty-one; and with this sixteen ounces of protection in his hand he stole to the corner and again prostrated himself and peered down the ell hall just in time to see Bodge begin the descent of a rear flight of stairs. Crawling to the head of the stairs Watt risked another glance. Bodge was seated on the bottom stair and was in the act of blowing out the candle.

"That closes that road," Watt told himself as he stole back to his room.

He picked up his boots and dropped one, then the other, heavily on the floor. Removing the candle on the window-sill and placing it on the floor he proceeded to test the window. As he had feared it was nailed fast. Through the broken panes he could hear the frogs croaking and catch the smell of growing vegetation. Returning the candle to the sill he crossed the hall and tried a door. It opened with a creaking protest. Stepping back he tried his own door. It swung almost noiselessly.

"Greased!" he muttered.

Entering the other room he found the air close and musty. Leaving the door open he went back to his room and seated himself on the one chair and pondered over the situation.

THE tavern was but a temporary stopping-place for Agger and his men. Already Bodge had reported to his companions downstairs that the traveler was unarmed. Both the back and front stairs were guarded. The gang was as merciless as it was lawless. It was neither southern nor northern in showing sympathy when loot was to be had. The string of horses he had glimpsed from the window undoubtedly had been stolen in the territory. There was a regular traffic in stolen stock, much of it being taken to Lexington. With the border overrun by men seeking excitement there were many excellent opportunities for the more lawless to carry out a program of systematic robberies, liberally sprinkled with homicides.

"In for-it," decided Watt. "Out of the frying-pan into the fire. Well, no horse-thief ever yet crowded a Watt without getting scarred."

He stood in the lighted window and removed his coat and waistcoat; then stepped to one side and quickly resumed these garments. To force the window would be to betray his fear and hasten the climax. And he was afraid despite his brave words. He was lacking none in courage when he could face the danger; but this waiting in a dilapidated old house, with only the mournful croaking of frogs for company, while a gang of cutthroats planned his death, drove fear into his soul.

Having completed his pretense of retiring he took several rolls of gold coins from the carpetbag and distributed them among his various pockets. Slipping a handkerchief through his boot-straps he slung them around his neck, and, tip-toeing into the hall, slammed the door behind him and slipped into the musty room opposite. Groping his way to the dust-covered window he tried the sash and found it immovable. Returning to the door he all but closed it and sat down with his back to the wall.

He considered the wisdom of trying to reach the garret, but as he remembered the silhouette of the house he could recall no sheds built against it. To ascend would place him in no better position than that he already held; and there would be the great risk of discovery did he try to reach the garret floor.

The only advantage that he possessed was the element of surprize. When the gang attacked, expecting to take an unarmed man unawares, the unlooked-for resistance might upset the villains long enough for him to break through and get outside the dismal place. He did not fear them as individuals; it was their gruesome readiness to butcher the helpless that appalled him.

He believed the crisis had arrived when he heard a door downstairs open and close and the faint sound of a deep voice. He believed it was Crow Agger speaking, who was supposed to be in Westport but who, he knew, was the man holding the lantern among the stolen horses. Other voices were added to the first, coming to him in a dull murmuring. Then the room below became very quiet. The heat and travel of the day made him strangely drowsy despite the imminence of his peril; or it may have been the musty closeness of his hiding-place.

He did not fall asleep, but there were moments when his attention was dulled. The creaking of a board in the hallway brought his head up with a jerk and jangled every nerve in his body. He placed his head against the wall and peered through the narrow opening. A man was advancing up the hall, and was keeping close to the wall to avoid more telltale boards. He carried a candle in one hand and a bludgeon in the other. He was neither Agger, Kinny, or Bodge. From the glance Watt got of the bowed head he believed the assassin to be the fellow who had halted him at the door when he applied for shelter.

The fellow stopped before the guest-room and softly blew out his light. Watt rose on his knees and came to his feet. He heard the faint click of a latch as the villain advanced on his murderous business. Watt slipped into the hall. The door before him was open as evidenced by the draft of fresh air sucking through the broken window. Without any hesitation Watt glided after the intruder and his outstretched hand touched the chair. He thrust his revolver into his belt and with both hands swung the chair off the floor. There came the smashing impact of the club on the bed, the shuck-mattress rustling loudly under the blow; and the uplifted chair finished its downward swing. Without a groan the Regulator fell on the blankets.

Sweeping his hand over the floor Watt caught up his carpetbag and stole up the hall. Almost at once he was alarmed by the sound of some one coming along the hall of the ell. He stepped into the room where Bodge had pretended to retire a second before the man entered the main hall. Watt believed this fellow must be Bodge, who had guarded the backstairs, and his hopes rose as he visioned a clear path out of the house. But the lower floor had come to life. The crash of the assassin's body on the bed had resounded through the shell of a building and had been the signal for the clumping of heavy boots and the sound of several loud voices. Already a croaking voice at the head of the main stairs was calling—

"All right, Ben?"

"He's still inside there. This is Bodge," called out the man who had come up the back way.

"Why don't the fool give us the word?" angrily complained Agger. "If he touches so much as two bits ahead of us he'll learn a everlasting lesson!"

Bodge was now past Watt's hiding-place, and the young man hurried up the hall just as Agger's candle advanced toward Bodge. Agger wrathfully called out: "Git inside there! What's the matter with *you?*"

"Something derned queer about this business," faltered Bodge, yet pushing the door open.

Others of the gang streamed up the front stairs, drawn by the bit of dialog between the chief and Bodge. Nor was the latter the only man of the five who was disagreeably impressed by Ben's strange silence. Although Bodge had thrown open the door of the death-room he still remained in the hall, reluctant to enter. Nor did he hold his candle above his head and endeavor to learn the truth through his evil eyes. Crow Agger stamped up the hall, fiercely demanding:

"What you standing there like a natural for? Why don't you talk up, Ben? No tricks with Crow Agger, Ben. If you've sneaked with that gold you'll be powerful sorry."

This suggestion that Ben had appropriated the money brought the three men behind Agger forward on a run, and as the five surged into the room Watt cleared the last of the stairs and raced through a back door. A horrible imprecation rang out from the death-chamber, announcing discovery, quickly followed by the splintering of glass as Agger in his fearful rage hurled what was left of the chair through the window. Then the leader was hoarsely shouting:

"Look out for him! He's loose! He's done for Ben! Stop him!"

Without pausing to pull on his boots Watt ran beyond the out-houses. A figure stepped before him and went down under the barrel of the thirty-one. The old house now resounded with oaths and threats. Agger's voice mounted above the mad confusion, shrieking:

"Let the dogs out, you fools! Let the dogs out!"

Watt ran along the picket-line and slashed it in half a dozen place and swung himself on to a horse. The thumping of boots down the stairs now ceased and the door flew open to spew forth Regulators and Agger's furious pets. The horses were quickly infected by the pandemonium and were snorting and running wildly through the grove. Watt managed to guide his mount around the out-houses and toward the stage-road. Both outlaws and dogs were confused at first by the riderless horses. One of the frightened animals broke through the grove and galloped toward Westport. Guns were fired after him, and the pack of beasts and more beastly men after him in full cry. Watt managed to turn his mount north and rode for Kansas City. And while there were reasons why he should keep clear of the river-towns he knew it was death to change his line of flight.

CHAPTER II

THE THREE ADVENTURERS

ENOCH FAIR, New England born, feared he was on his way to participate in troubulous times when he saw the St. Louis papers and noted how the merchants of that city headed their advertisements of lethal weapons with the one word KANSAS in big type. It was obvious, according to the *Daily Missouri Republican* and other sheeets, that shotguns and rifles and revolving pistols—just received by Adams & Company's Express—were among the first needs of the Kansas bound. The young immigrant found his ardor for colonizing rapidly cooling, now that the steampacket *Keystone* had made the long narrow levee at Kansas City.

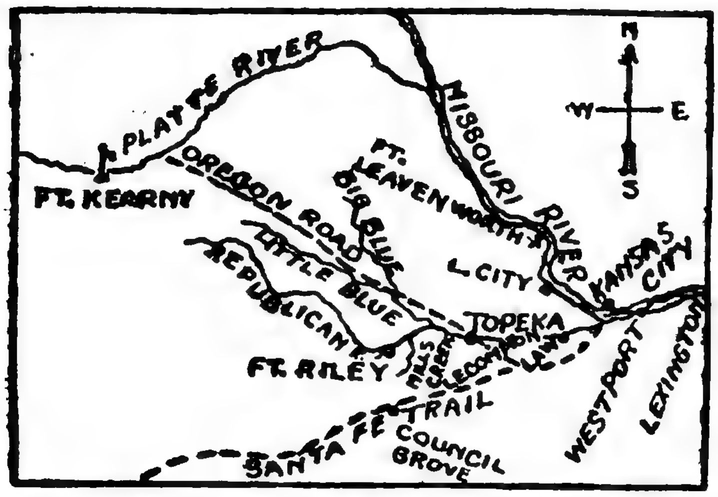
From the hurricane deck he looked down on a scene of confusing activities. He had no eyes for the wooded shores of Clay County across the river, nor even for the general aspects of the town with its small houses perched on little hills and the chimneys built on the outside. The levee, forming the river-front street, and the windows of the Gillis House, a short distance away, demanded all his wide-eyed attention. Overnight he had entered a new world.

There were New Mexicans, filthy in appearance despite their show of silver and tawdry finery, bound for Santa Fé. There were Mormons, many more women than men, and they were interested only in reaching Salt Lake City. Army officers, bound for Fort Leavenworth and perhaps for Fort Riley and other posts out on the edge of the wilds, kept much by themselves and showed a disinclination to mingle with the motley, milling mass of excited humanity. Here and there a plainsman, weathered and gaunt, viewed the shifting groups with cynical gaze, wishing himself back in the open places and only intent on getting there.

Half a dozen nuns, bound for St. Mary's Catholic Mission, were restful to the eye because of their placidity. An Indian papoose, wearing a brass medal embossed with the profile of Queen Victoria, stared stolidly on the world that was to roll over and eliminate the world of his thousand fathers. A Wyandot woman, as pale of complexion as many a white woman, waited patiently for an opportunity to board the boat, where she would be compelled to eat at the second table.

Added to these were the negroes, those in bondage and those who were free, also the broken sons of good families and the desperate sons of ferocious sires, and merchants and traders. Fewer in number, yet all too many, were the cold, cruel faces of the river-gamblers. This class stood united against the world and were skilful tacticians; they would not begin their play until after midnight, and would strip their victims and be ashore long before sunrise.

While Fair, goggle-eyed, stared at the hotel windows and beheld arms and weapons being brandished, the hostelry suddenly disgorged a mob of men fantastically attired. They were men of large build and were not unusual because of their immense boots and their blue or red flannel shirts; nor for their knives encased in boot-legs, and the navy revolvers in their stout leather belts. Their rifles and shotguns also belonged to the picture, although the cutlasses carried by some were a bit incongruous. Again the insignia—a heart, or an eagle, or some such device—braided on the front or back of their shirts, only impressed Fair as being odd, as did the feathers and brass-stars garnishing their slouch hats. Yet these trifles could be explained as catering to a childish love for display that is so characteristic of the red man.



But what did amaze the New England man were the satin vests and narrow dress-coats worn by some of the profane and boisterous mob over rough shirts. And there were others who wore girdles of cords and tassels over their big belts. About two hundred of these vociferous and blasphemous fellows forced their way through the traffic of the congested street, each being disorderly in proportion to the amount of whisky he had consumed, or the natural violence of his thoughts.

A number of the wild crowd swept in a torrent over the gangplank, dispersing the colored stevedores and buffeting their way to the cabin and the bar. In age they ranged from old men to mere boys; and all were proud to be border ruffians, and all were eager to accentuate the fact by their dress and many weapons.

Yet satin vests and dress-coats were no part of a border ruffian's apparel. Even the unsophisticated Fair realized that; and he found the flaunting of the unusual finery to be as sinister as it was grotesque.

"New to you?" queried a tall, solemn-faced young man, who stood leaning on a rifle and idly watching the scene.

"Never saw anything like it!" replied Fair, glad to find some one to talk to.

"You must be from the North. I can tell by your clothes if I hadn't heard your voice. You'd better say you're from Maryland. If you put it too far South they'll know you're lying. But a Maryland store-clerk might fool 'em if they git curious. When they ask if you're right on the goose, or right on the hemp, you say, "Yes, siree!' And say it real hearty like, just like you was glad and proud of it."

"I hate to be told what I must say," complained Fair.

"Free country. Say what you want to. But these fellers have just come from raising —— and might act up something brash."

"What's happened now? What have they done?" asked Fair, beginning to feel very uneasy.

"Shucks! Mean to say you ain't heard?"

"I've kept by myself for the last twelve hours. Too much threatening talk to please me."

"They burned Lawrence yesterday. Wiped out the new Free-State Hotel. Best house west of St. Louis. Those cords and flub-dubs they're wearing round their waists came from the curtains in the hotel. Injun medicine-man would mortal well like to git hold of some of those tossels."

"Burned Lawrence?" gasped Fair, mopping his face. "You—you're all right on the hemp?"

"I'm Western," was the terse, proud reply. "Don't have to prove I'm right on anything. They won't trouble 'Prairie' Palmer much. Know some one will git killed mighty quick if they do."

"But you must be northern or southern——"

"School-book talk!" broke in Palmer. "My back's to the east. I'm western." And he turned away to watch some swarthy Spaniards, who gave a barbaric touch to the street life.

Fair was still brooding over the gloomy news when a man ran up to the deck and passed out printer's slips to the little group of army officers. These slips answered for extra editions of the border papers. One issued by the *Border Times*, printed in Westport, bore the caption—

KANSAS BALL OPENED
A GLORIOUS TRIUMPH

One of the officers, observing the young man's curiosity, passed the paper over to him and, pointing to the headline, significantly warned—

"Not a good place for a man unless he is a good dancer."

"Meaning I'd better turn round and go back?" asked Fair.

"I didn't say that," said the officer; and he turned away and resumed his low-voiced conversation with his companions.

Fair wished himself back among the amiable home hills, where differences of opinion seldom were carried beyond a peace-justice's office. Pride was holding him to the dangerous adventure. The year before a neighbor had returned to the humdrum respectability of the village and had defended what Fair considered to be a weakness by picturing the new land as being impossible for human occupancy.

This faint-hearted one described Kansas as having no water, no fuel, no food; in short, a land barely able to support the roving tribes of Indians. Fair and his friends had arraigned the fellow very severely for lacking proper spirit. Fair's cheeks burned as he stared at the printer's slip and recalled some of the derision he had directed at the weakling. Now he was understanding and respecting his neighbor's homesickness. In truth, he was envying him, too, and was wishing himself back in the same placid environment.

And yet the young man had not felt himself to be in an alien country until the boat brought him among a daily increasing number of threatening, fiery-spoken men. His nerves had given their first, apprehensive jump when he saw the St. Louis newspapers and observed the prominence given to Kansas and the need of deadly weapons. For the last fifty miles the packet seemed to be running between endless banks of execrations and horrible prophecies. Fair was not lacking in spirit, else he never would have undertaken the long journey; but his courage was not of the flash-in-the-pan variety. It would be impossible for him to threaten a man's life unless goaded to a homicidal pitch. And for hours he had heard scarcely anything but blood-curdling declarations, involving the commission of murder. What in many instances was empty bluster he had accepted as being cold determination. It appalled him.

His courage was a steady, reliable asset, the true quality of which he himself was very ignorant. It was the growth of an inherent sense of justice, and would carry him into open violence only when pride and reason told him he was in danger of losing his self-respect. All along the river, at Jefferson City, Glasgow, and Lexington, he had heard much rabid speech and had hoped the morrow would find him in a calmer atmosphere.

Now the spectacle on boat and levee was furnishing concrete proofs of lawless violence. Had he made the trip through Iowa and Nebraska with men of his own kind, he would have maintained a stout heart for the work ahead. But to be cooped up, and yet isolated, on the boat turned the damper on his resolution. The Westerner's talk was disconcerting. The veiled warning given him by the army officer was the last straw.

Disconsolately he walked forward and joined a man who seemed to be keeping apart from the others. This man was of middle age, and calm of visage although wearing a melancholy expression. When Fair accosted him he turned and made a courteous reply. Fair was attracted to him and eagerly whispered—

"You're from the North?"

"Massachusetts first. California afterwards."

"I've felt sort of hungry to meet some one from up that way."

The man smiled rather forlornly and cautioned:

"I'm sorry; but it's best you're not seen talking with me. You can truthfully say you don't know me."

Hurt by this rebuff Fair's spirits touched bottom. Yet, like a man crowded and cornered, his slumbering courage began to awaken. With his lower jaw creeping forward he retired. The stranger called after him:

"Just a word, young man. If you're going to Leavenworth City you'd better put up at McCarty's Hotel."

"Thanks," Fair coldly replied.

Then he did from choice what he had been shrinking from doing; he descended to the cabin and mingled with the rough and boisterous crowd. No one gave him any heed as the general attention was focused on a man waving a revolver and haranguing violently. He had lingered long over the bottle, and in voicing his blood-thirsty desires he interlaced his speech with oaths at every few words.

Some of his audience laughed at the exaggeration of his tirade and at the same time encouraged him to continue. Others heard him with no saving sense of humor and applauded vehemently. And in the assemblage were those of northern birth, who were more to be condemned than their border associates; for they were playing a beastly part for hope of political or trade favors.

"I tell you I'm bound to fetch down some one before I'm done," the orator shouted as Fair joined the mob. "I quit my store in Weston to come down here and take a hand. That's a fact. I reckon I can raise the top off the head of ary one of you with this here tool."

Much dodging and laughing on the part of the audience followed an extra flourish of the revolver.

"I tell you I'm bound to drop somebody before I'm done—that I am. I've got to fight for the liberties of my country. Yes, sir! That's a fact. Just show me one of them sneaking, whittling worms! There ain't one in the whole kit and caboodle of 'em what knows how to fight. That's so. That's a fact. I'd just like to sot my eyes on the man who'd open his mouth here. Yes, sir!"

And he paused to get his breath and glare about him belligerently. An admirer howled—

"If ever there was a living monument to the nobility of the human soul it's Colonel J. B. Jepp, Weston's most flourishing trader!"

Warmed by this tribute the merchant yanked out a second revolver and shouted:

"Lead's the best argument! Let me alone for taming 'em down. Let me alone for that. That's so."

Then his wild gaze happened to rest on Fair's beardless face.

"Here, *you*!" he roared, unsteadily pointing a weapon at Fair, thereby sending those on each side of the young man plunging frantically out of range. "I'll fix you up mighty smart, I will. Just step forward so's I can put a chunk of lead into your head."

Fair was unarmed, and there was none in the cabin he could call a friend. He glanced about and wondered if he could jump behind the bar. But even while he weighed this forlorn possibility the merchant was trying to draw a bead.

"I've caught your track, you flung-up, sneaking ——" he began.

Then his arm was swept down to his side and the weapon was torn from his hand and tossed over the heads of the onlookers. And a tall, slim, black-haired fellow, with a strand of Missouri hemp in his buttonhole, was jovially urging:

"Come along, old horse. You want something to eat."

"Eat?" cried the merchant, raising the remaining gun. "Think I can eat before I've finished the duty that's standing before me."

The newcomer deftly secured this weapon and sent it after the first. Then he gave the orator a push that sent him reeling against the bar; and quickly stepping to Fair's side and resting a hand on his shoulder he said—

"Just the man I'm wanting to see."

And he would have led him from the cabin if not for the fellow who had favorably commented on the nobility of the merchant's soul. This man was of giant stature; and interposing his huge bulk he growled:

"Not so fast, friend. You seem to be all right. But this other man——"

"He's all right, too," interrupted Watt, removing his hand from Fair's shoulder and pointing to the hemp in the New England man's buttonhole. Fair stared in amazement at the badge he was wearing.

"Mebbe yes, mebbe no," growled the big man. "But I'm just salvarageous enough to argufy the p'int a trifle."

"Out of the way, you drunken loafer," snapped Watt, thrusting the muzzle of the pocket Colt against the man's stomach and causing him to double up and precipitately retreat.

A sullen roar greeted this display, and red-eyed men began surging forward. Fair picked up a chair, Watt pushed him toward the stairs leading to the hurricane deck. The two men would have come to mischief had not Prairie Palmer glided between them and the vicious mob. The Westerner's long rifle rested in the hollow of the left arm, his steady gray eyes unblinking as he met the angry gaze.

"Leave be! Leave be!" he growled. "You have no business with these men. Both wear hemp. Some of you know me. You know some one is going to git killed mighty quick if you don't stop this foolishness."

"Palmer, you don't fit into this," objected the man who had given ground before Watt's gun.

"Leave be!" harshly repeated the plainsman. "You don't want to fetch any warpipes to *me*."

The big fellow did not. He suddenly remembered he had business at the bar, and dispersing the mass of men by forcibly plunging through it he bitterly berated the boy waiting on the whisky trade for not "looking spry." The crowd turned its attention to a new orator, one who had had an actual part in the looting the day before. Watt and Fair, now on the hurricane deck, ceased their warlike bearing and took time to appraise each other.

"Why did you do that?"

Fair touched the hemp in his buttonhole.

Watt laughed recklessly.

"—— knows! I've trouble enough without toting any for a northern man. Perhaps it was because I almost had my back to the wall very recently."

He became silent and gazed at Fair curiously.

"I'm much obliged to you," said Fair.

"We're about the same age; yet I feel older than you," was the irrelevant reply.

"You're southern. I never could wear clothes the way you do. You must be pro-slavery."

"Ball to the muzzle. Knife to the hilt," was the emphatic reply.

Then with a laugh:

"But I'm no blood-drinker. Lots of us aren't. Those men below own no boys. They're in this just out of a love for deviltry. I own more hands than all that ragtag could lay claim to in a thousand years. But I'm not running around with a bowie-knife a-bullying folks."

"It was very neighborly, what you did for me, even if your interest in Kansas is the opposite of mine."

"Folks in your part of the woods must be free spoken," remarked Watt, but with a smile that took the sting out of his words.

Fair colored, but stoutly persisted:

"Truth is truth. No sense in blinking it."

Watt nodded and explained.

"I'm not bringing any hands up here. It isn't the land for them. Not a country for our kind of plantations. Lots of this bloody-head talk is being made by northern men, who figure on getting a following and then secure some benefits."

"I'm afraid that's true," sighed Fair. "But I don't understand why they don't pull back and mend their ways."

With an amiable smile Watt suggested—

"Perhaps they find themselves in Macbeth's fix—

> " 'I am in blood
> Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,
> Returning were as tedious as go o'er.' "

"I guess that hits it," assented Fair. "And here comes the man who discouraged them from piling on to us. I've spoken to him before. Name's Palmer."

Prairie Palmer would have passed without speaking had not Watt stepped up to him and thanked him for his interference.

"That's all right," shortly said the plainsman, disliking to be thanked. "But ain't you making yourself sort of a landmark for a feller that ducked ashore when the telegraph wires began talking? I got off the boat at Lexington soon after you quit it."

"I had my reasons for leaving the boat. But how do you know the wires were talking about me?" quietly asked Watt, his gaze narrowing with suspicion.

"Sheriff come aboard right after you left. He was going to hold me up for you. Had two guns on. Had a telegraph description of a man he was hankering to head off. Looked me over mighty careful, but the clerk told him who I was."

"Did he show you the telegraph message?" This anxiously.

"Narry a word of it. Wonder if you wouldn't been a trifler wiser if you'd kept on riding till across the border."

"Tried that, but had trouble just before making Westport. Gang wanted to kill me in an old house. Leader was Crow Agger."

"Crow Agger! He's all bad. Men below deck are angels beside him. You oughter killed him."

"I think I did kill one man. It was dark. Couldn't stop to learn the particulars. Didn't get a chance at Agger, though."

"Sho! You must 'a' run into one of his hoss-stations. He has a regular hiding-out place somewhere in the territory. So many hosses being 'pressed' and fetched over the line that Crow is running 'em in most amazing and has several stations on the Missouri side. Westport folks are getting tired of it, as some of their nags are taken in the excitement. Leave a horse hitched in the street there and chances are some one else finds him first."

Watt became moody. Palmer turned back to Fair and quizzically asked—

"Well, neighbor; about made up your mind to quit, eh?"

"I'd have quit fast enough if they'd let me alone," snapped Fair. "Now they've picked on me, I'll stick. Of course you understand how I feel for the help you gave us."

"None of that. You're going to preempt?"

"I'll take up my quarter-section, yes."

"You'll probably be jumped," discouraged Palmer. "Now that's the beauty of the plains. No one can jump your section out there as you own all you can see from sunrise to sunset. You can talk, too. Look at the folks on this boat. I vow, it made me homesick when I had to come east and go to St. Louis on business. Homesick as a yaller dog this minute. Here we be, all sorts of people—and a few Injuns—but no one dares make a yip except the drunken crowd below. And none of them dares say anything except the same old thing. Maybe you don't know the territory very well. If you don't you'd better take up your land out near Lawrence, or Topeka. Round Pawnee, Osawatomie and Tecumseh will be all right, too. Or Council City. In those sections you'll find steam saw-mills, churches, schools; shopkeepers, farmers, mechanics and laborers. Now his kind"—and he nodded toward the preoccupied Southerner—"hang out in Leavenworth and other points on the river. When you say 'river' out here you always mean the Missouri. His kind are mostly doctors and lawyers, and land-speculators. Both of you fellers ought to quit it all and git out into the open where you'll have a chance to breath new air."

"I'm a good mechanic. I know something about farming. And I can earn my keep at rough labor."

"Labor!" jeered Palmer. "Why should a white man work for somebody else?"

"So he may work only for himself sometime."

Watt lifted his head and advanced to crisply demand:

"How can a man get into the Santa Fé trade? I overheard some of your talk."

"Hitch up with some wagon-train at Leavenworth City. The rush is on now that the grass is high. Good way to break into plains life. Gives you a taste. Once you git a taste you'll want a full feed; then you'll be your own boss and travel away from the old trails. Too many trails through the country already. Trade a little, hunt a little; see lots of country. All outdoors is yours for the taking."

"Ah, that's the life for me!" softly exclaimed Watt, his dark eyes flashing.

"Not for me," stoutly declared Fair. "I'm going to get a piece of land and build a house. Every man ought to have a house of his own."

"A house to be tied down to!" said Palmer. "I haven't any house and don't want any. I can put up a shack anywhere and when I quit it I know I can put up another. I'm welcome to stay with several bands of Injuns. A roof is something to keep off rain and snow. It'll never hold me hitched to one small piece of the country."

A man, whose whiskers reached nearly to his belt, made his way on deck and loudly announced:

"I'm a border ruffian. I'm proud of it. My old pap is one. He's proud of it. If I had a son he'd be one. I ain't got no use for city-raised critters. I can draw a bead at forty rod. Always shoot dead-center. You two fellers there with store-clothes—If either of you is honing for a little fling I don't mind a fight right here and now. I'm mighty easy to whip. Oh, yes; mighty easy! S'pose one of you jest jump me. We'll smash in most createdly."

"Colonel, some one is buying drinks for all brave border ruffians," informed Palmer.

The fellow vanished with ludicrous haste. Fair, who had taken the challenge seriously, was much relieved. Palmer read his face and assured:

"Most of them just bark. The ones who bite do little yapping."

Watt glanced behind him to make sure none of the officers was within hearing, then defiantly told Palmer—

"That telegraph description you know about was for the sheriff to arrest me."

"Ain't a bit interested," said Palmer, affecting a yawn.

"You've done me a good turn. I'm glad the sheriff didn't find you," added Fair.

"All right. But no one can say I was driven to changing my name. I'm tired of staying up here. Let's go down and find something to eat."

Fair would have preferred to remain on the deck and go without food. But Palmer's curious eyes were watching him, and he suddenly discovered it made him angry even to think of any one standing between him and food. They descended to the cabin, Fair taking the lead and Prairie Palmer, his brown face wearing a slight ironical smile, bringing up the rear. Fair advanced boldly, his head up, his blue eyes steady; and like Bunyan's lions those he expected to dispute his path bothered him none. The greater number of the men were bound for Leavenworth and were now scattered over the floor of the cabin, engrossed with cards, or sleeping off their liquor. The three new acquaintances had no trouble in being served, and the fare was excellent.

Neither Fair nor Watt got much sleep that night, although Prairie Palmer, the one most accustomed to solitude, rolled in his blanket on the upper deck, and with his rifle at his side slumbered peacefully. Some of the passengers continued their card-playing until long after midnight, but the greater number finally succumbed to weariness and drink, and sprawled thickly over the cabin floor.

IT WAS not until nine o'clock in the morning that the trying journey was ended with the packet arriving at Leavenworth City, the best landing for many miles on the Missouri. At first Fair was disappointed in the appearance of the two-year-old town, for he had been repeatedly informed it was the "finest city" on the river. He had yet to learn that many Western "cities" might be limited to only two or three huts.

Leavenworth boasted of about two thousand population with many transients passing through daily. What at first disagreeably appealed to his New England familiarity with established things and well-grooved orderliness were merely the physical characteristics of any border town. Where no white man had dwelt two years before he was beholding a thriving community spread over low hills. And if there were no large public buildings yet his knowledge of the lumber trade allowed him to understand the town's advantage in being directly connected with St. Louis' pine timber-yards. This fact was pressed home by the neat dwellings with their fenced in yards and their piazzas—galleries was what Watt called them.

From the deck he looked on some thirty stores crowding on to the levee. Some of these stores and warehouses were of stone and many were two stories in height, and all appeared to be covered from top to bottom with glaring signs. This method of advertising gave the half a mile of river-frontage a garish, patchwork appearance. Fair, however, was no esthete, and he rather approved of this medium of publicity. In his opinion it bespoke of enterprise.

The levee was much broader than that at Kansas City and consisted of the natural bank of the river; muddy in wet weather and dusty in dry. The packet was moored against a sharp acclivity, and while the passengers were landing Fair and Watt remained on deck watching the busy scene. Business was depressed, Palmer had told them, because of mob violence in the territory, but neither of the young men could detect anything to suggest commercial stagnation. The street leading from the quay was choked with long wagons, each hauled by six or more yokes of oxen, or by mules, and all eager to be off on the long trip across the plains. Goods of every description were heaped in piles on the levee, ranging from the barest necessities to pianofortes. The latter were imported by those who were yet building their log or shake cabins.

And had the young adventurers but known it the colonization of Kansas differed from the upbuilding of any other section of virgin territory. Immigrants coming to conquer a new land, where the first shelters would be of shake or logs, were bringing with them the furnishings of long established eastern or southern homes. There was little beginning of housekeeping here with what few neccessities a pack-horse or two could bring in. The river furnished a broad and easy road for freighting and there was no limit to quantity and kind of property a settler could have unloaded at Leavenworth.

The settler was more often embarrassed and hampered by his possessions than he was by the lack of them. In many instances a man's portable property was dumped on the building site and the cabin was erected around and over it. The new friends would find dresses of plain coarse stuff and log-cabin bonnets of satin and cotton velvet in humble homes; and they would also see in shake or log huts hats of satin and velvet and plumes or Paris flowers, dresses of rich material and costly furs.

And there were other incongruities the newcomers were to learn about.

Leavenworth City stood on land belonging to the Delaware Reserve, the squatters having pre-empted the ground against the protest of the red owners. It required eleven days for a letter to come to the territory from Washington, whereas a traveler could cover the distance in six days. Watt and Fair would be much surprized when told that more men were killed by murder than in the many pitched battles between the warring factions.

Also, it might run counter to their expectations when they discovered the indigenous Indian tribes were much less advanced in civilized ways than were those eastern tribes transplanted to the territory. Poverty and pianofortes in log cabins; towns built on land to which the builders held no title; these and many more oddities were to disturb the reflections of all newcomers accustomed to a sense of proportion and a settled order of procedure.

The boat crowd at last thinned out and Watt and Fair went ashore. Watt had only his carpetbag for luggage. Fair hunted over a heap of freight to recover his trunk. At last he located it, only to find it had been opened and rifled of its contents. Prairie Palmer, who had hastened away to wander among the wagon-trains the moment the boat made the landing, now reappeared and with quiet amusement watched the expression of indignation spread over the victim's angry face. Fair beheld him, and exclaimed:

"I've been robbed. Where can I find the sheriff?"

"You don't want a sheriff, son. He might be wearing your best wes'coat. They often go through a feller's plunder—personal effects—to see if he's fetching in any guns."

"But I had no guns and they've taken my few clothes!"

"Took the clothes, probably to pay them for their dis'p'intment in not finding any guns."

"Is there's any law in the land——"

"There ain't. Leastways, not for you. Forgit all about it. And if you happen to see a cuss wearing your clothes don't fly off the handle. Just try to make yourself believe the clothes fit him real well and belong to him. I'm Western and wear all my clothes on my back. Ain't been robbed yet."

Fair sullenly took the few remaining articles and stuffed them in his pockets, gave the trunk a kick, and turned away. Watt grinned and remarked—

"After all, there's nothing like traveling light."

"I'm too mad to joke about it," growled Fair. "Let's walk and stretch our legs and hunt up a lodging-place."

His friends were agreeable, and Palmer acted the guide. He led them from the river-front through the tangle of long, cumbersome covered wagons, through groups of plainsmen in buckskins, by Indians from the reserve hauling coal in oxcarts to the white man, and always within sound of the blustering border bullies. They found the streets laid out with great regularity and covering a space equal to about one square mile. The streets, however, had not been graded, the buildings being erected without any attention being paid to leveling. Up and down the low hills stood the houses, the thoroughfares uneven and sometimes obstructed by the stump of a forest tree. Foot-paths that once threaded a rimeval wood were still used and Palmer preferred following such. As a result the three were continually cutting across a main street to pass through a yard, or to skirt the rear of a row of houses.

The town contained examples of the territory's architectural history. From the two-story warehouses of stone and brick the sightseers passed to the neat frame dwelling stage, and on the outskirts of the town came to the most elementary stage. For here were squatters living under shelters of boughs and mud, or under a piece of canvas thrown over a pole. On every hand remained the scars of excavations and the stumps of what had been a fine grove of timber.

Turning north, Palmer took them to within sight of Fort Leavenworth, the principal garrison in the territory, its white walls and tall flagstaff conspicuous for many miles from its location on the boldly projecting bluff. Palmer stared at it with varied emotions, and commented:

"You can't know till you git a taste of the plains how you'll feel when the old fort drops from sight. Like waving your hand for the last time to an old friend and yet glad to be on your way. When it happens you *have* to come east it's the first thing you see to remind you of the river."

He was anxious to press on and visit the fort and have them meet his friend, Colonel Sumner, commander, and accompany him on a little tour of inquiry among the various government trains starting forth up the Oregon trail or down the Santa Fé road. But Watt was opposed to meeting any one armed with authority; and as they were already more than two miles from the town Palmer reluctantly turned back.

But the sight of the fort set the plainsman's tongue to working, and during the return he talked enthusiastically of the increase in the plains trade now the Mexican War had removed all restrictions. He sketched the possibilities of the Indian trade and endeavored to prove to them how the far-flung mercantile ventures were bound to make Leavenworth a mighty city. Had he been interested in the new towns springing up he could have added that, in addition to traffic with the red men and the many trains sent to outposts on the two great plains roads, the trade with the territorial pioneers was already of great volume and was rapidly increasing.

But his heart was in the far-off places, and the supplying of agricultural implements and household furniture to squatters along the Kansas and other rivers interested him but little. His vision was stimulated none when he saw an Indian driving an ox-drawn cart of coal into Leavenworth or Westport, although he knew the red man secured it from some outcroppings and that there must be vast stores of the black fuel under the soil. He already had said his back was to the east, and his talk now ran on the hundreds and hundreds of wagons, each drawn by twelve or more yokes of oxen or teams of mules, and of the army of men necessary to keep this traffic moving.

But he did not reason back and explain how this constant demand for men to handle the plains commerce worked to keep wages up for those remaining in the territory, and must speedily make Kansas a rival of Missouri in stock-raising. Watt saw only the glamour of adventure in Palmer's talk. Fair's methodical mind worked back to elementals and he made the deduction the western man had overlooked, or ignored.

Palmer raised his brows and repeated:

"Number of trains depends on the stock raised back here? Why, I s'pose that's so. Mighty poor chance to raise stock in the Kiowa or 'Rapaho country. Reckon the Injuns would do all the *raising*." And he laughed grimly at his joke.

"And wages, too," persisted Fair.

"Why, I s'pose so. Man would be a fool to work here sawing lumber and plowing if he could git more money traveling with a train, seeing new country each day and finding enough excitement to keep his blood stirring. Why, yes; if it wa'n't for plains trade wages here would be as flat as a dried scalp. But I ain't interested in that end of it."

"I am," stoutly declared Fair. "Raising stock should turn a handsome profit."

"Not enough excitement in stock-raising," grumbled Watt. "I want to see things moving fast. As Palmer says, each day different, with a fellow never knowing just what the morning will bring."

"That's my way of thinking," warmly indorsed Palmer. "Tie me up to a plow and I'd die inside a year. I'd like to have been the first white man to enter Kansas. I wasn't born early enough, so I prowl round farther out. The trade with Oregon don't amount to what it used to, now they're using the Pacific route. But the Government is still sending trains some six hundred miles up the road to Fort Kearny and Laramie; and something is always happening to keep a feller on his nerve. And there's more trading and Government trains than ever over the Arkansas River road to Santa Fé. Independence, Kansas City, Leavenworth and Westport are all fighting for the trade, but as the border is pushed west the Missouri towns will drop out of the race. Funny how things work out, Men from Missouri swarm over the border, pre-empt Delaware Reserve lands and build Leavenworth, then go back home and leave others to build up the trade that'll steal most of the business from Missouri. It wa'n't long ago that every one thought Westport would always be the jumping-off place. Being left behind now.

"I tell you, you fellers oughter git into it. Your train would cover ten to twenty miles a day. Each wagon carries about fifty-five hundred pounds. Freight rates depend on the season. In the best months it's a dollar a hundredweight for each hundred miles; two dollars a hundredweight in the bad season. If you'd make a few trips and learn how it's done you might run a train of your own if you can raise the money to make a start on."

"I can raise the money after a bit. Plenty of money if I can have a little time to get at it," promptly spoke up Watt, his eyes sparkling.

"I haven't any money to invest. I'm out here to get a quarter-section. Stock raising seems a mighty good business," said Fair.

They came to the road a short distance west of Leavenworth and stood one side and watched scores of long, heavy-covered wagons crawl by. The train was in charge of boisterous Missourians, Spaniards, breeds and a few Indian-hunters. It was strangely picturesque and stirred Fair's cool New England blood, for his forebears had conquered the wilderness and had braved the ocean in swapping rum for West India molasses. The season was Spring, and romance and adventure were in the very air. The wind from the west thrilled the blood and urged all who were not sluggards to journey into the little known. Fair felt the urge, just as when a child each freshet brook in May had prompted him to build a tiny raft and float whither white water took him. But he fought the impulse down, doggedly determined to take up land and go in for raising stock as soon as he had accumulated capital.

Watt surrendered gladly; and had one of his companions suggested joining the long caravan he would have been the first to turn his back on the town. But Prairie Palmer had passed through that phase of plains life and now looked on it only as a stepping-stone to full experience. He had matriculated in a sterner school. No longer was there any zest for him in journeying with an armed band. He had reached the peak of self-dependence and found his pleasure only as he was foot-free to wander where no wagon-trains had ever ventured. So with the aroma of the clean land in their nostrils they reentered the noisy town, each man busy with his own line of thought.

As they walked toward McCarthy's Hotel they observed that all the many barrooms and "groceries" they passed were crowded, that all street corners were thickly packed with men, that the gambling-houses were doing a rushing daylight business. Fair was shocked by these frank evidences of shameless wickedness being flaunted on every hand, although he was now used to the sight of armed men drunkenly shouting for "Law and order." The occasional discharge of a pistol no longer made him jump, but there were sights that jarred him more than all displays of brute force. No visions here of a far western empire awaiting development, nor of covering the vast territory with flourishing farms and ranches. Men talked as they thought; and their minds were busy with recent outrages.

"This is McCarthy's. Looks to be plumb full," said Palmer as they came to a small wooden house from which radiated the dull roar of excited voices.

There were groups of men clustered before the front windows, striving to peer inside.

"It doesn't look very inviting," agreed Watt, as Palmer began elbowing his way through the door, his companions at his heels. Guns, knives and clubs were piled in a corner of the office. In a front room opening off the office was much loud talking and threatening. Men blocked the doorway, just as on the outside they filled the windows.

Palmer managed to secure the attention of a distracted clerk for a few moments and reported to his friends:

"Feller says there's no room here, but that you two can take a chance on the floor if you come back at night. They've got Dr. Robinson in the front room. They're examining him. He was elected governor on a Free-State ticket. Arrested and fetched here by the way of Kansas City. That's why all these folks are here."

The group at the door were pushed aside for a moment to allow the exit of several heavily armed men. Fair stood on tiptoe and glimpsed the prisoner, and discovered he was the man who on the boat had proclaimed himself to be an unsafe person for an immigrant to be seen with.

Forcing their way to the street, Palmer conducted them to a larger hotel, but when Watt learned it was much patronized by the

Southern element he held back and awkwardly explained:

"Southern folks are the people I don't want to meet just now. But you fellows go ahead. I can shift for myself easily."

"No, we'll stick together," said Fair. "We'll try elsewhere."

"All right," assented Palmer. "Watt's business is his own. I'm not interested. Anyway, the place looks like it was jammed to the doors. Well, I hate to do it, but we'll have to try the Temperance House."

"Sounds sort of unpromising," commented Watt.

"Sounds good to me if it ain't one of their darned lies," said Fair.

"No licker is sold there," gravely warned Palmer. "It ain't what I'd lead a friend to if there was any other place. On t'other hand, no one will ask you if you're sound on the goose. Mostly Free-Staters go there but you can't git one to admit it. You'd better wear that a bit longer, son."

The last to Fair, who was removing the hemp from his coat.

"You'll remember that you ain't been bothered any on the street yet."

"I won't wear it any longer," decided Fair.

"Your business. Ain't interested."

The Temperance House was new, low of roof and had two rooms fronting on the street. Compared with the other hotels it was very quiet. Fair found it restful even before he had entered. A long veranda, or gallery, with steps at each end, extended across the front. As the three approached nothing was visible except a row of boots on the top railing. The boots disappeared and a row of heads appeared. The loungers were busy chewing, spitting, and whittling; and after staring at the newcomers they tipped back their chairs and their heels went back to the railing. There was no crowd inside. The floor of the office at the left of the entrance was freshly scrubbed. There was a bar in this room but it held nothing stronger than a bucket of muddy Missouri water. Back of the office was the dining-room, and the wanderers were pleased to learn they could be served at once. They were in time for the second table as shown by the signs of wreckage not yet entirely cleared away. Meat, Indian corn-bread with molasses, bacon fried in grease, cakes and apple sauce, and coffee comprised the menu.

As they were finishing the meal the landlord entered, stopped and stared at them in surprize. Addressing Watt he said—

"Cap'n, I thought you fellows had been in here once before."

"Only once."

"Well, I'll be derned!" And he examined a huge silver watch. "Been here all the time, eh? It's dumfound curious. Never happened here before."

"What's the trouble?" asked Fair.

"No trouble. Just mighty strange. The time you fellows take. But stick as long as you want to, and eat hearty."

"How long do your guests usually remain at the table?" asked Watt.

"Well, I ain't narrer enough to time 'em, but off-hand I'd say the average is about five minutes, general—but pitch in, general, you'n your friends. It'll tickle my cook. Best cook this side of St. Louis. And most of 'em in St. Louis would look like—— slouches alongside of *him*. Yes, sir!"

After dinner Palmer left them to attend to some business connected with his departure for the mountains. He promised to look them up during the day or on the morrow. Watt began to believe he liked Fair, although the two were opposites in many ways. The Southerner was fiery and impetuous and quick to display anger. The other was more methodical of thought, and, ordinarily, counted the cost before taking an unusual step. They took chairs on the veranda and Watt surveyed his companion with a whimsical smile slightly curving his lips, and generously offered:

"I've got money. You've lost your wardrobe and need things. Let me loan you some money."

"No," quickly refused Fair. "This country may get the best of me, it's all so strange and raw. But I won't start in by shifting my responsibilities on to another man's shoulders. Yet it's mighty neighborly for you to make the offer."

"But you need weapons."

"I'm used to rifles, but know nothing about revolvers."

"At least wear a knife."

"And fall down and cut myself. I don't know how to handle a knife."

"Well,—— it! You've got to have something," insisted Watt, frowning as he considered the problem.

A rifle was all right for the prairie, but in street crowds, where passions were allowed free rein, only a hand-gun or a knife could be of service.

"Let's walk a bit and stretch our legs again," he suggested.

They had not gone far before a man bumped into Fair and cursed him loudly. The man's belt bristled with weapons. Fair bit his lips and made no reply. The bully went on. Watt's face was drawn and white after he had heard the torrent of abuse. His voice was thick and unsteady as he complained:

"I couldn't jump in without making it appear I was taking care of you. He'd never talked that way if you'd been wearing a hand-gun, the low-down dog! You've got to carry some kind of arms, if only a club."

Fair nodded and muttered:

"I don't think I'd care for a club. He'd have killed me if I'd shown any fight; so I held on to my temper. But I don't like to be talked to that way. You wait right here a minute while I buy a weapon I know how to handle."

"But a rifle at close quarters——"

"Wait right here just a minute," Fair interrupted; and he hurried across the street and into a hardware store.

When he reappeared he was carrying an ax over his shoulder. Watt gasped in amazement, and muttered—

"I could understand a hatchet—but an ax!"

"*Now* let one of those dirty loafers try any more abuse on me," hoarsely announced Fair. "I'm used to an ax. I've been a woodsman."

"—— me! I believe you've got guts enough to use it. But it don't seem regular."

"Fighting is a waste of energy. When I fight it'll be in my own way so's to waste as little energy as possible."

Whether it was the ax, or because the jostling throngs were too absorbed in discussing border problems, Watt could not determine, but Fair was not insulted again that day. They covered the town quite thoroughly and managed to keep on the outskirts of annoyance. They visited McCarthy's Hotel and for a second time inquired for a room and received the same answer. Then they returned to the Temperance House, and Watt dickered with the landlord for the room opposite the office. This room faced on the street and could be entered from the veranda as well as from the hall. It contained two beds and the landlord professed to be very indignant at the suggestion that sleeping accomodations for four men, "not counting them that could bunk on the floor," should be turned over to the exclusive use of two men.

"It ain't only not reg'lar, it's hoggish," he declared.

Watt allowed a gold coin to show in his hand; and, clearing his throat, the landlord amended—

"At least, at first it might strike a fellow as being a trifle grabbish, general.

He opened his hand and the coin passed into it, and he set forth on the delicate task of ousting the four regular occupants of the room. He reported later that he had succeeded only after representing Watt to be recovering from a nervous breakdown, but still subject to fits when his strength and temper were violent.

"So you'll be all right tonight, general," he concluded. "But of course the boys will have to have the run of the room in the day time. If any 'alligators' come bursting in from the street in the night you just put 'em out, general. Either you, or the major."

The room was rude and cheerless with unpainted walls of warped boards. The mattresses were of the corn-husk variety, and the blankets testified to men who slept in muddy boots. A small rickety table and two chairs were the furnishings. But after supper that night the friends retired, weary for sleep, and found the mattresses could be soft and that the wind sifting through the boards afforded wholesome ventilation.

There was no way of locking the street door, and twice during the night some drunken alligators entered, but showed no fight when Fair, ax in hand, invited them to leave. In the morning, however, entrance to the room could not be considered a trespass. Before Fair and Watt had quite completed dressing four men were playing cards at the small table. Soon others entered and sat on the beds and made business arrangements of various natures.

There being no wash-basin in the room Fair went to investigate and learned that guests were supposed to perform their ablutions in basins on a board at the rear of the house. Above the basins was a small mirror, and brush and comb dangling from a string. Taken all in all, even Watt, more inclined to complaining than his companion, agreed that the landlord honestly desired to furnish his guests with the necessities if unable to supply the luxuries.

PRAIRIE PALMER looked them up after breakfast. Fair's ax amused him at first. But after he had observed the new slant to the young man's jaw and had beheld the bulging arm muscles as the ax was swung to demonstrate its nice balance, the plainsman's face grew grave; and there was respect in his voice as he said:

"Yes; it'll do. It'll be a bloody business if you ever git into a fight with it."

"It'll be damnable," frankly admitted Fair. "But after I've stood about so much abuse I'll stand no more. Still, it's sure to be ghastly. When it hits the man hit will be past mending. Now you two fellows don't have to bother with me. I'm going to take to the military road and follow it down to the California road, and then keep going till I strike some likely-looking land that ain't been pre-empted. After filing notice I'll hunt up some work and earn enough money to keep me in grub until I can build a home and cut and sell some hay."

"And you'd cast me off!" protested Watt. "Can't you give me a chance to find myself? Let me go along and take pot-luck till I know what I want to do."

Fair feared this speech was prompted by a desire to help him; and he would have nothing to do with charity. Yet the dismay on Watt's dark face seemed to be very genuine. Palmer, who realized Fair's difficulty even in securing sufficient food should he wander forth alone and persist in his self-dependent role, now warned him:

"Walking at this end of the territory will git you nowhere. I'm taking four hosses through to Topeka, where I shall load them with goods for the Indian trade. You two must ride two of them. That'll help me out. Then again, if I try to take them through alone some of the Regulators may try to 'press' them. In return for your help I'll tell you about the country and show you the most likely land that hasn't been gobbled up. At the start I might as well tell you, Fair, that you might as well take a rock in each hand and jump into the Missouri as to go pre-empting without any supplies."

"He knows I have money that I shan't be using," complained Watt.

"I can get work in some of the towns near my land and pay as I go," said Fair.

"That's a slow way and not necessary," objected Palmer. "You could have worked as a laborer back East. If you're bound to build a house and improve your land you don't want to lose lots of time. At the best you can't do much this season beyond building a cabin and cutting some hay. Now I deal with a merchant here who'll be glad to give you credit. Lots of his trade is on credit. It's much cheaper to buy your staple groceries here than down the road. Business is done on credit. Are your cursed New England notions against taking the merchant's credit?"

"Why, that'll be all right. It's business," quietly agreed Fair. "I'm glad to take credit from the store, but not from friends." Then shyly: "Maybe I'm going too fast. Maybe you two don't feel we're friends yet."

"Oh, shut up! You're a good fellow, Fair, but you make me tired," cried Watt. "Palmer, lead the way to that merchant."

The plainsman soon introduced them to a man who was all right on the hemp, but perfectly willing to take any man's money in trade. Palmer's guarantee by word of mouth was all sufficient, and the merchant would have sold the young settler a much larger bill of goods could he have had his way. The wisdom of buying certain supplies in Leavenworth was shown when at a small increase over the Missouri price of three and a half dollars a sack they purchased flour that would have cost them six dollars the sack along the California road. Before he had finished Fair had bought a shotgun to use on game, two sacks of flour, some canned goods and such carpenter's tools as would be absolutely necessary. Palmer told him he could buy fresh eggs, milk and poultry from any Indian reserve did he locate near one.

"Now that you're through trading, partner, I'll buy a few things," spoke up Watt. "I'll pay cash."

He bought a shotgun, a Sharps' rifle, bacon and more canned goods. Palmer displeased the merchant by substantially cutting down the impulsive young man's order by reminding him he could buy at almost any store along the California road such things as cheese, beef, ham and sugar.

"Unless you buy of the Injuns you'll

have trouble in gitting butter, syrup, milk, or potatoes," he added.

By the time they had finished they had enough supplies to overload two horses even after Palmer's experienced hands had adjusted the loads; and Fair humorously remarked—

"Seems we must walk after all."

"When do you folks want to start?" asked the plainsman. "Now, or after dinner?"

"Now," quickly answered Fair. "Horses are loaded, and we mustn't unload and load again."

"The quicker the better," heartily agreed Watt. "But I wish I had some of my boys along to put up that cabin."

"I'll put up the cabin," Fair sharply informed him.

"We won't fight over it," Watt assured him. "If I'd only held my temper instead of fighting—Well, that's all behind me. I'll hold up my end of the load, partner. And after we get things started you can go ahead and make a fortune raising stock."

Palmer gravely contributed—

"If you're trying to be comical, colonel, I'll tell you right now that many fortunes are going to be made in this territory in raising stock."

CHAPTER III

GETTING ACQUAINTED

IT WAS near sundown when Palmer and his companions reached Alexandria on the Stranger River, thirteen miles from Leavenworth. This settlement consisted of two houses, one accomodating a general store and the other a postoffice. Both had been raided and robbed that very day. Several empty whisky barrels and a quantity of United States mail were scattered along the road. Dusk came quickly, as there were no mountains for the sun to linger behind and thereby furnish the delightful twilight period. Palmer had planned to camp by the river, but a man in the looted postoffice said there was a large camp of Regulators somewhere near and that the bandits were apt to return at any moment. Three men with as many pack-horses and one riding-animal would be a prize the band would not overlook.

"We'll go ahead and work by their camp," decided Palmer.

Within two miles of travel they sighted several fires burning some distance back from the road.

There was much singing and shouting around the fires but the road appeared to be clear. Just as all three were believing they were not to be halted a figure rose from the ground close by the road-side, and a befuddled sentinel was calling out:

"Hi! Who'n sin be you folks?"

Palmer knew it would be fatal to property if the carousing band learned of the horses and supplies in the road. To his companions he whispered:

"Keep moving along. I'll overtake you. If they chase you don't show any fight."

Then he dismounted and leaving his horse in Watt's care went toward the sentinel and bruskly explained—

"Looking for your camp. Take me up to the fires."

"I'm s'posed to be watching this danged road," grumbled the sentinel.

"While your friends drink up all the rum, eh?" laughed Palmer. "No harm in leaving the road long enough to join me in a drink. Reckon I know most of your friends. I'm Prairie Palmer."

"I'll go with you. If I ain't a free man what's the use of me fighting for the glorious liberties of the Constitution? Besides, I'm mighty dry."

They made for the camp, Palmer seeing to it that their progress was very slow. All the time Watt and Fair were hurrying the four horses over the road. By the time the plainsman was within hailing distance of the fires his friends were swallowed up in the darkness.

"Who's that there?" demanded a man.

The sentinel answered:

"Tobe Moor and his friend, Prairie Palmer. We want a whack at that jug."

"You'd better take a jug back with you. Didn't oughter leave the road when you're standing guard."

"It's danged lonesome out there alone. I'm going to stay up here for a while."

Men crowded around Palmer. Several recognized him and passed the word he was "sound" and "all right." He drank with them and remained to chat for a while. When he departed he had the satisfaction of knowing the sentinel had forgotten to mention to his mates the four horses and the other two men. When out of the firelight he picked up his heels and ran rapidly down to the road and at a long swinging trot finally overtook his two companions.

"We were just about to picket the horses and go back and look for you," said Fair. "We were mighty nervous at your being gone so long."

Palmer laughed at their fears and proudly replied:

"I'm Western. They haven't any trouble to fetch to me. There's a small creek near here. We'll make a dark camp and be off early in the morning before those scamps have finished sleeping off their rum."

THE EASILY found the stream, fringed with white-oak, and, spreading their blankets, they slept soundly until an hour before sunrise. They hurriedly cooked breakfast and resumed their southwesterly course. Palmer explained they would strike the California road opposite Lecompton. Through the glory of the sunrise they pressed on. The eastern sky was a sea of gold through which a red sun was climbing. Each waterway could be traced by a silver veil of mist, as the first sun-rays touched it and worked the miracle. Fair was anxious to find suitable land; Palmer was impatient to be off on his trading-venture and secure his one hundred and fifty to two hundred per cent. profits; but Watt was captive of each fleeting minute, enslaved and enraptured by every mile of the flower-bespangled way.

Verbenas sweetly scented the air. The "compass" plant, pointing to the north, showed its yellow flowers underfoot. Roses climbed among the trees and a few persistent red berries of the bitter-sweet dotted the vines with scarlet life. The foxglove, proud in the midst of its dark green leaves, never wearied of escorting them. The sunlight found two pillars of clouds and promptly turned them into gold, and, behold, there stood a celestial gateway. Before them the shifting shadows dappled the undulating surface of the fair land with moving areas of every shade of green, and where the eye reached the limit of vision all was a turquoise blue.

"Stay here!" abruptly cried Palmer, and before either of his companions could speak he had swung his horse from the road and was galloping briskly toward a small cabin in a grove of walnuts.

"What's the matter?" Fair blankly asked of Watt.

"Nothing seems to be the matter. He's a queer chap. When he yelped out I felt like drawing a gun."

There was no sign of life around the cabin. The door stood open, and the two in the road were surprized to see Palmer ride at a smashing gallop up to this and fairly fling himself inside. In another half minute the watchers were amazed to behold half a dozen Kansas Indians violently erupt through the doorway and race madly through the grove. Then Palmer leisurely reappeared, turning to say something to the invisible occupant. Then, mounting his horse, he cantered back to his puzzled friends.

"Some of those greasy beggars were bedeviling the little woman in there. Her man's away and they knew she was green to this country and they were scarin' her into bringing out all the cooked food. If they call on her next year she'll know enough to take a kettle of water, or a hatchet, and drive them away. They'd eaten everything in the cabin if we hadn't come along."

"How did you know they were in there?" asked Fair.

"Caught a glimpse of their ponies at the edge of the grove before we came in sight of the cabin. White men would have left their horses at the door."

"So those are your noble red men, eh?" laughed Watt. "Why, one of my overseers could whip a whole regiment of them into flight. I believe I could myself. I can do lots of damage with a long lash."

"You and your overseers would fare badly a few hundred miles west of here," replied Palmer. "Those fellows were some lazy Kaw Injuns, or Kansas Injuns. They won't fight. But this territory is as big as England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland all jammed together; and once you pass beyond Fort Riley you want to pay attention to your hair and be sure it's tied snugly on. The Kaws have lived too close to white men to have much fight left in them. A prairie woman knows the breed and packs them off the same as she'd drive a dog or a cat out of the house. But if you hanker to see the fighting red man take a trip with me. Or wait till they try to open a road up the Smoky Hill River country and see what happens. The Oregon road—which is the California road for the first thousand miles, or until you strike Bear River in

Utah—and the Arkansas River road to Santa Fé made the Injuns mighty mad, but they've got used to thinking the two trails are there to stay. But just let another road be started between the two, one that'll cut right through their buffalo country, and watch how much —— there'll be to pay! And it's coming mighty soon, I'm sorry to say."

"Why sorry?" asked Fair. "More roads, the more civilized country."

"I'm Western. It'll only take a few more roads to wipe out the West and leave only farmlands. Then I'm a man with no country to ramble round in."

They struck the Kansas a mile above Lecompton, the territorial capital, by night. Palmer had no intention of crossing the river to the town, rather to Watt's disappointment, but went into camp among the bushes.

In the afternoon of the next day they covered the remaining miles to Topeka, but remained on the north side of the river and camped near a half a dozen families of Kansas breeds. These Indians, Palmer informed his companions, owned the surrounding woodlands, although squatters were cutting the timber freely and some were making fortunes.

"Seems to be the white notion that an Injun mustn't own anything except a horse and dog," commented Palmer at the end of his talk.

That night after they had eaten and gotten rid of their curious neighbors, the plainsman said:

"Tomorrow we'll cross to the town and I'll begin getting my plunder together. You can keep along with me as far as the Mill Creek country in the Potawatomi reserve, where there ought to be some likely looking land. After I've seen you well-located I'll push on to Fort Riley, my real starting-point for the West."

"But how can we pre-empt land in an Indian reserve?" asked Fair, puzzled and slightly troubled. "Won't the Indians resent it?"

"Oh, they won't trouble you. Their reserve is on both sides of the river and measures up about thirty miles square. There's nearly four thousand in the tribe; but they see how the thing is going now. Leavenworth has been built on Delaware land. Later on the land will be sold at auction, each man buying in his own quarter section and the Injuns will git the money and move on once more."

ON ENTERING Topeka next day the travelers found Kansas Avenue the center of the town's activity. Some eighty houses were in the process of construction and half an hour on the street convinced Fair there could be no excuse for a man loafing. Palmer advised them to unpack the horses at the Commercial Headquarters Hotel and leave their supplies there until he was ready to conduct them down the Fort Riley road.

"You see, I've got to have my horses. If it wasn't for that you could pack your supplies along. As it is, you can take your blankets and some grub and go with me till you find a likely location. After pre-empting you can come back here and hire horses to pack your stuff down to your quarter-section."

"Then we would have to make another trip to return the horses," said Watt.

"I'm a regular natural-born ijiot!" growled Palmer. "Of course it would make an extry trip. I can't think clear till I git out so far there's nothing in sight but the mountains and the sky-line. We'll do this: I'll speak to a friend and he'll give you credit for two hosses. That'll fix you fine."

"If Watt's going in for stock-raising he can buy the horses. If he ain't I'll buy them on credit, and be much obliged to you, Palmer."

Watt would not commit himself definitely and the packs were left at the unfinished hotel to be called for. Palmer left them to see about his trade-goods and the two wandered the streets and listened to the conversation of the citizens. Intense excitement permeated each group the newcomers passed. No one asked them if they were right on the hemp, or sound on the goose, for Topeka was a Free-State community. Suspicious glances were cast at Watt, but Fair's unmistakable Eastern bearing and appearance was accepted as a passport for both. While Watt preferred to pause and listen to recitals of recent outrages, Fair hunted up the foreman at Constitution Hall and had a brief talk with him. On rejoining Watt he disgusted the young man by announcing he had hired out at two dollars a day while waiting for Prairie Palmer to complete his plans and take to the long road. Watt declared he never had, and never would, subject himself to manual labor. So his was the weary task of waiting in idleness while Palmer flew from task to task and Fair toiled with wheelbarrow or carpenter's tools.

At the end of the third day Fair returned to the room they had hired to find his impulsive friend the worse for drink. He upbraided him. Instead of flying into a rage, as would have been natural to one of his temperament, Watt laughed uproariously and jeered.

"Yes, I've been at the whisky and playing cards in a camp of California men on the edge of the town while you have been an industrious, sober youth. While I've been —— round and wasting my time you've covered your hands with blisters and earned two honest dollars. All I got out of it beside the whisky is this."

And he emptied his pockets on to the bed.

"Look at 'em! Yellow and white boys. Five hundred dollars for a few hours' loafing. More'n you'll make in a year off from your —— land. Met the gen'lmen. Insisted on a game— Here. Half of it's yours, Old Sober Face."

"No. You're good-hearted and most generous, Hale, but you're making a big mistake. You're your own boss, however. Palmer tells me he is ready at last and I'm starting down the Fort Riley road tomorrow. I've earned six dollars in this town. You've made a potful of money. But I only know my own way of doing things. I'm what you'd call darned narrow. But I like you, Hale, —— if I don't! And you've got some disagreeable ways at that."

"You plain-spoken cuss! Don't you know that's no way to talk to a man who's half-drunk? Why in —— can't you hold that cold New England tongue of yours till morning? Then I'll be sober and repentant."

"To much to be done. Too many things to think of. I've made my talk. We'll part good friends, Hale. I never believed when I was hearing Beecher talk in a church near Yale College, that I'd ever take a liking to a Southern man. Shows how narrow folks up my way can be. Then you come along and make folks like you. I'll say good-by now, Hale—I'll be off before you're sober."

Watt drew himself up and gravely accepted the extended hand and held it for a few moments, then slumped down on his gold and silver and went to sleep.

But next morning, while Fair was loading his two horses he had bought on credit, Watt appeared on the scene, leading a dapper animal, all saddled.

"Going back, eh?" asked Fair, surprized to see the Southerner abroad so early.

"Going forward," Watt coldly corrected.

"Made a deal with Palmer, I take it."

"With Palmer? No. He doesn't seem to have any use for me."

"I see. Going to Fort Riley."

"No matter where I'm going. There's no law against my following the road with you and Palmer till our ways part," growled Watt.

"Of course not, Hale. Palmer's waiting for me now."

And so, after all, the two did not separate as Fair had expected; and thus there were three of them again, instead of two, as Palmer had taken for granted. Palmer did not have much to say to Watt as they rode down the California road, with their shadows stretching before them. Fair felt sorry for Watt and endeavored to be very amiable. Watt answered in surly grunts. All that day they kept together, turning from the road to ascend Mill Creek, and made their camp on the west bank of that stream.

While supper was cooking and Watt was wandering along the bank Palmer told Fair:

"I can't take him along with me. He's too hot-headed."

"He's going on to Fort Riley and then make new plans, I believe. Probably will join some Government train."

"Good. In the morning I'll show you some land near here that'll be fine for stock-raising. The best black soil farming country is between here and the mouth of the Kansas. But for grazing this creek is all right. Good for crops along the bottom, too."

Watt maintained a moody silence that evening, and it was a relief to all to turn in for the night. In the morning Palmer led them a few miles up the creek to a fine grove of oak and walnut, and asked:

"How's this for a cabin spot? All the open country way to the Rockies for grazing—once you git started."

"How long before I can get title to my claim?" anxiously asked Fair.

"Not until after the Government survey is made. Probably two years from now. By that time the land-officers will be ready to clinch your title. You'll have free use of the land for the two years and can buy it in at the sale at the upset price of a doller'n a quarter an acre. No one will bid against you, and, of course, you'll not bid against any other squatter. Of course you'll have to stand the risk of some one trying to jump your claim. Only way to meet that is to fight."

"All right! I'll fight!" And Fair's eyes blazed. "It's mighty good of you, Palmer to take all this trouble and lose so much time just to give me a boost. Hope you'll never need any help, but if you do and I know it—well, we'll let it go at that. I'll pre-empt here. I'll get my stuff at the camp and not keep you from the road any longer."

At the camp Palmer got his animals ready and waited, looking questioningly at Watt.

"Well?" he asked at last.

Watt shook his head and with a mirthless laugh explained:

"Changed my fickle mind again. I'm not going to Riley just now. You're a white man and I'm glad to have met you. If it's ever safe for me to go back to Mississippi and you care to wander down there the State will be yours."

"I'm Western. My back's to the East. Wish you both the best of luck."

And with a curt nod the plainsman rode down the creek, his pack-animals trailing along behind him.

Neither of the young men spoke until a dip in the rolling land hid him from view; then Fair, with an attempt at naturalness inquired:

"Er—Watt, what shall I do about the stuff you bought? We've brought it along, thinking you were going through to Fort Riley." And he stared at the heap of supplies stacked under a walnut.

"I'll stay here and watch our property while you go back to town and buy another ax," said Watt. "You've either lost yours on the way, or forgot to pack it. It's one thing you must have if you're going to chop down trees."

In dismay Fair overhauled his supplies and found that Watt's gaze had been most observing. The ax was missing. The thought of riding back to Topeka was disheartening, especially since his enthusiasm for erecting a shelter was very great.

"We can cut the trouble in half if you'll take my horse and ride back to the little store half-way between the mouth of the creek and the town. They'll surely have axes for sale there. You can go and return if you don't mind riding after sundown. My nag will travel four miles while either of yours is covering one."

The proposal was too tempting to be refused. Besides, Fair told himself, it would not be right to keep Watt waiting any longer than necessary.

"It'll make it easier for both of us," he said as Watt brought up the horse.

Fair's spirits rapidly sank as he cantered over the back track. Since leaving the East he had met two men whom he felt he knew and both of whom he liked. Palmer was much more dependable; and yet there was something about Watt and his spendthrift ways that attracted and held one to him. He was forced to admit that he regretted parting from the hot-headed Southerner more than he had from the self-contained Westerner. There was a boyish quality in Watt that seemed to be lacking in Palmer.

A dozen miles brought him to the little wayside store and he interrupted his meditations on beholding three men standing before the store. They were rough, shaggy looking fellows and had knives and revolvers in their belts. He sensed danger, and yet did not feel that he could wheel about and run away. Watching them closely, he rode up to the store and before he knew it one of them had him covered with a navy revolver and in a raucous voice was commanding.

"Dust off that hoss! Where'd you steal him, you low-down hoss-thief?"

"I did not steal him," indignantly replied Fair and remaining in the saddle. "I came here to trade. You've no right to call me a thief."

"By ——! We'll see about that, young bantam. Git down! Git down! Or I'll heave a hunk of lead through your innards."

The other two men drew their weapons to reenforce the command. Unarmed and helpless, Fair gritted his teeth and slipped to the ground. The spokesman for the trio addressed his companions and with mock indignation cried—

"What be we to do to protect our liberties and to protect the liberties of this glorious country if we let a low-down, onery hoss-thief go running round loose?"

"We don't desarve no liberties if we let him go," warmly declared a ruffian. "Shoot him, chief, like you always do."

"Dead men are poor talkers," added the third man.

Fair moistened his dry lips and stared helplessly at the heavy revolver. All he could think of was Watt, waiting for him to return; Watt at last leaving the creek and never knowing what had become of his horse or the man he had loaned him to. Then the leader lowered his revolver and Fair felt his soul lifted high. The fellow was trying to scare him, that was all. He found his tongue and repeated:

"I came here to trade at this store. I am no thief."

The leader plucked at his bristling black beard and slowly announced:

"You're a thief. We know that hoss. Bodge, standing right behind me, used to own that hoss."

"Owned him till some low-down houn' stole him," growled Bodge.

"He never owned him. The horse was bought in Topeka."

"As I was saying, you're a thief. But Crow Agger is a marciful man. These men who know me best say I'm too marciful. But I can't help it. Law'n' order in this country would git ahead quicker if I wan't that soft-hearted. So I find I have to give even a hoss-thief a chance."

He paused and Fair's concern now was limited to losing the horse. It came as a shock, for the chief of the Regulators to add:

"You pick up your heels and run down that road. And I won't turn old Betsy loose on you till I've counted ten."

"You wouldn't murder me!" protested Fair, horrified.

"—— you! Scoot down that road!" snarled Agger, lifting the gun.

"But you'll kill me if I run," cried Fair.

Crow Agger's small, shiny eyes glistened with homicidal lust as he gritted:

"I'll sure kill you if you don't. You have that one chance. Mizzle!"

"If I'm to be murdered it won't be through the back. I won't run," decided Fair.

Through the store door came an aged man. His whiskers were long and white and his big spectacles rode at the tip of his nose. With shuffling steps he joined the group.

"Granpap, you can trot right back," said Agger.

Without appearing to have heard him the old man removed his spectacles and began wiping them on a cotton handkerchief.

"Git to —— out of here!" roared Agger.

With never a word the old man finished cleaning the spectacles and replaced them low down on his nose.

"This young limb has been caught with a stolen hoss," wrathfully continued Agger. "We know you're right on the hemp, granpap, and don't want to fuss you up. Now you git back into that store where you belong."

"I'm a Southerner. Was a slave owner till I lost my property," querulously spoke up the old man as he fussily replaced the handkerchief in his pocket.

"We all know that, granpap. You're sound on the goose. Sound's a nut," declared Bodge. "But the cap'n says for you clear out."

Before any of the men could sense his purpose the old man whipped out a huge revolver of the Colt's 1847 pattern, a weapon that weighed four pounds, and rested the barrel over his left arm, the muzzle pointing at Agger. And his high-pitched voice warned:

"Now, Crow, you put up that gun and ride away. Take your friends with you. Can't have you boys spoiling trade."

"——! What does this mean?" shouted Agger.

"Last time. Ride fast. Can't have my trade spoiled," warned the ancient, cocking the big gun.

The Regulators exchanged glances, sidled to their horses and mounted. The old man gave no heed to any except the leader, and his last warning was:

"If any of your boys try any tricks you'll be the one to pay, Crow. You know better than to come here spoiling trade."

The three as one wheeled their horses and galloped south of the road. When he was sure they had departed Fair told the storekeeper:

"I owe you my life. They meant to murder me."

The man put up the revolver and started for his little store, shrilly replying:

"You're from the North. But you can't say a *bona fide* Southern settler approves of murder. Probably will lose me Crow's trade, but I can't help it. You want to buy something?"

"An ax. I'll always remember——"

"Come inside. I have a few good axes."

He went to the rear of the room and brought forth several axes and nodded approvingly as Fair swung them and tested them and finally made his selection. He paid for the ax and again began—

"I sha'n't ever forget——"

"If that's all you want you get to —— out of here before they lay an ambush for you. Fair fight's one thing; murder's another."

Carrying the ax and determined to make a fight if again molested, Fair started back for the creek. He was not attacked, however. When he came to the smoldering remains of the camp-fire he found Watt in his blankets and asleep. Without disturbing him he picketed the horse and spread his own blankets. When he awoke it was broad daylight and Watt was busy at the fire.

"I've overslept!" he cried. "And I've stopped you from getting an early start for Fort Riley."

"To —— with Riley," mumbled Watt, continuing his awkward efforts with a skillet. "Wish I had some of my boys up here to do this woman's work. Burned me four times."

"Aren't you going to Fort Riley?" asked Fair.

"No."

"Mind if I ask what your new plans are?"

"The old one. Going in for stock-raising. I'll pre-empt just south of you."

"But you won't like it."

"I know it. I like gambling and whisky, and folks make a fuss about it."

"And you were mad at what I said a few nights ago."

"Wished you'd stop talking," growled Watt. "I have as much right to go in for stock-raising as you have."

"Why, Hale, of course you have. I'll help build your cabin. You help build mine."

"We'll build yours first. I've been looking about. Come over here and see the spot for your shack."

And he set the skillet of bacon to one side and stalked deeper into the grove. When he halted it was to point to four timbers laid in the form of a square. In the center stood a pole with six shingles nailed to the top of it.

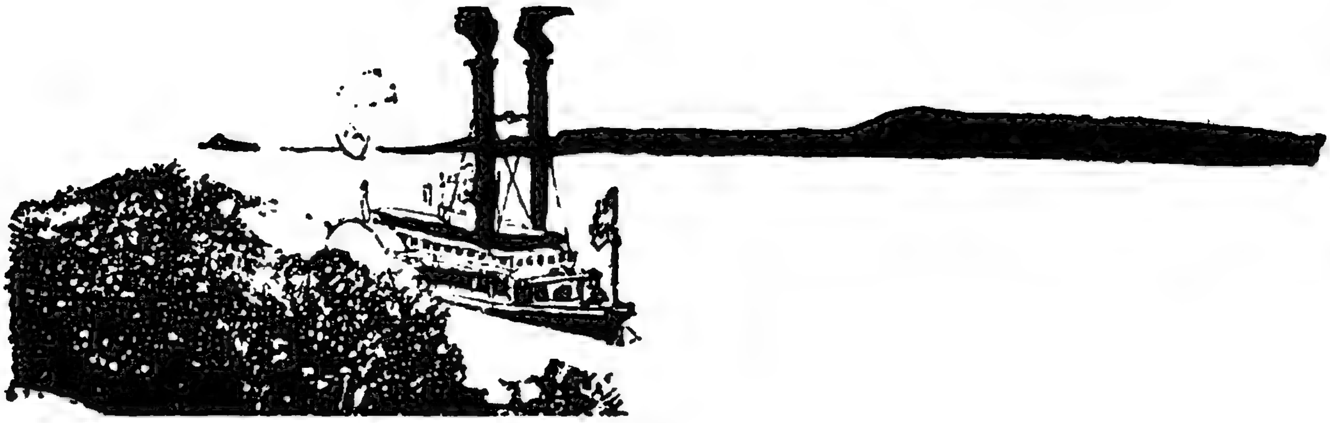
"Just what does this mean?" Fair asked, his heart sinking as he feared new difficulties.

"What the first fellow here called a 'caution.' Sort of a notice for you to read."

And from inside the logs he picked up a whisky bottle and uncorked it and pulled out a piece of paper. Fair took it and read:

> This is Bud Peoples' claim he'll shoot anny man what comes in a mile of it.

TO BE CONTINUED



The Job

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE by John Webb

Author of "Seamen All," "The Best Defense," etc.

NIGHT came and the daytime turbulence of the waterfront partly subsided—partly subsided only, for the waterfront never really rests.

A black touring car rolled westward along Twenty-third Street and turned north into West Street, keeping as far from the rays of the sidewalk lights and the eyes of the passers-by as possible. Behind the wheel of the car sat a heavily-built, dark-skinned, alert-looking young man who glanced furtively to the right and left and to the rear as the car rumbled over the uneven stones. By his side sat a taller, lighter-skinned man who slouched lazily, puffing at a battered brier pipe and staring straight ahead. As the automobile approached Twenty-eighth Street it swerved close to the sidewalk to pass another which was going south.

Mike Slattery, government prohibition agent, and Joe Dugan, his co-worker, were standing on the curb as the car swerved in, abreast of them and so close that they could have stepped to the running-board had they thought.

"Stop!" shouted Mike Slattery to the driver of the car as it swept past; and then over his shoulder to Dugan—

"There goes 'Kid' Harvey with a load of liquor."

Instead of stopping, the driver of the car, 'Kid' Harvey, stepped hard upon the accelerator and bent low over the wheel.

"Spotted us!" he gritted. "——! Just my luck."

"*My* luck, you mean," said his companion glumly. He pulled his hat down tight on his head and calmly tapped out the contents of his pipe.

"You can get out if you want," snarled the Kid, at the same time advancing the spark regulator a notch.

"Humph! You're a good guy all right," said the other sarcastically, and he settled deeper in his seat.

"Well, stop growling then," snapped the Kid. "We're in for a chase now, and we'll have to make the best of it. Stick out your head and see if you can see Slattery. Careful now—he's quick with his gat, Slattery is."

The car was now tearing madly through the night, jolting from side to side and careening wildly as Harvey swerved to avoid other vehicles or holes in the road-bed too deep to be taken without danger of stalling the machine. The paving of New York's waterfront is abominable, and the Kid cursed it as he braced himself for each succeeding bump.

"Can't see 'em at all," said the taller man, leaning cautiously out and looking back. "No—yes, I do! There's a taxi coming two blocks behind us—that's 'em sure.'

"They'll never catch us with a cab," said Harvey confidently. "I guess we'll slip 'em, Homer—if some bull don't pot us from the sidewalk."

He pressed down again upon the accelerator and passed as if it were standing still an automobile going at moderate speed in the same direction.

"Hey! hang on, Homer! What the —— do you call this?"

Harvey tore at the emergency brake lever and they both braced themselves to keep from going through the wind-shield as the car slid and skidded with locked brakes.

Ahead of them, at right angles to the street, completely blocking it, the driver of an enormous truck had stopped his team and was doing something to the harness of one of the horses.

"Get out o' th' way, you fat-head!" screamed the Kid. "Get out, —— it, get out!"

"Aw, pull in your ears," growled the truck-driver, and he began leisurely inspecting a hame-strap. "What's yer hurry?"

" 'S too late to turn and go back," cried the Kid. "We'll have to get out and run for it. Come on, Homer!"

They leaped from the automobile and stood for a moment hesitating which way to run; and then, at sight of a blue-coated figure coming toward them from a side street, Harvey sprinted across West Street with Homer close at his heels. They came to a pile of merchandise in front of a pier entrance, dodged around it, and doubled back the way they had come. The taxicab swung about, shot across the street, and, with a groaning of brakes, slid to a stop directly in their path.

The Kid became suddenly calm, deadly calm. He was that kind, the Kid; with his back to the wall he became calm and deadly, as dangerous as a wounded jungle cat. He thrust one hand within his coat and slipped from a shoulder holster a vicious black automatic pistol.

He crouched low in the gloom, his back against the great corrugated iron door of the pier, now closed. He brought the pistol to bear on Slattery, and watched with half-closed eyes the advancing detective. Dugan had slipped around to the other side of the pile of merchandise and blocked their retreat. The uniformed policeman was coming across the street at a run. The gloom at the pier was so thick that none of the three officers could distinguish the two men crouched by the door, but they knew they were there.

The Kid's finger tightened slowly on the trigger of his weapon.

"Don't shoot, you crazy fool!" cried his companion suddenly.

He struck out with his open hand and sent the pistol spinning to the ground.

"This way! Quick!"

He pushed the Kid backward through a small door let into the large one, for the use of pier watchmen and the crews of ships.

An old watchman came from an office at one side of the door and shouted for them to stop, but they ignored him and raced out upon the pier. Another watchman, even older than the first, arose from the box he had been sitting upon and held up his hand, but they brushed him aside and ran on.

"When we get out o' this I'm gonna take a sock at you for knockin' my gat out o' my hand," panted the Kid as he ran.

"And if we don't get out of it I'm gonna do the same to you for gettin' me into it," returned Homer.

The pier was completely housed-in, that is, it had walls and a roof, but at equal distances there were openings in the sides for the gangways of ships. All but one of these openings were closed with iron doors let down from above, and through the one there was an inclined gangway, giving evidence that there was a vessel now in berth at the pier. No other exit appearing, Homer led the way to the gangway; and they went up it and stepped to the deck of a ship. Shouting and the pound of feet upon the pier told them they had no time to lose.

"Aft," said Homer; "we'll drop over and swim for the next pier."

"I can't swim," answered the Kid. "We'll go forward and slid down the bowline to the street."

They went forward, down into the waist and climbed the ladder to the forecastle head. The Kid crept into the eyes and peered through a hawse-hole. He jerked back, swearing foully.

"Harness bull standing in the street waiting for us," he growled.

He turned to Homer.

"Now what, wise guy?"

Homer looked wildly about. Loud voices came from the direction of the ship's gangway.

"We'll search aft, first," they heard Slattery say. "The cop in the street'll see they don't get over the bow."

"Let's see if we can get in down under here," said Kid Harvey desperately. "I saw a door as we were comin' up that ladder. Maybe we can hide until they think we got away and give up lookin' for us."

They went down the ladder, through the doorway under it, and came into a small space in the center of which was another ladder, leading down. Through an open doorway they could see into a triangular compartment, the sides of which were lined with bunks; in some of the bunks were sleeping men.

"Down there," said the Kid, pointing to the ladder leading down, and they went toward it.

They descended cautiously, step by step, into what seemed pitch darkness, and soon found themselves standing upon a wooden floor. As their eyes became accustomed to the darkness they saw a number of small, circular, glass-covered ports on both sides of the space they were in; by looking out they saw that the ports were but a few feet above the water. Had their knowledge of ships been greater they would have known they were in the forward 'tween-deck. Compactly piled cargo, reaching from the floor to the beams overhead, came nearly to the foot of the ladder; there it was dunnaged off to prevent shifting.

"I feel like a rat in a trap," grumbled the Kid. "Where th' —— are we now?"

"Not in jail—yet," said Homer, "I know that."

Harvey opened his mouth to retort, but a sharp, Cockney voice, coming suddenly from the deck above them, startled him into silence.

"Hall 'ands on deck!" shouted the voice. "Come on, s'ilors, roll out!"

They thought for a moment that the command was addressed to them, but a sleepy voice from where the men were sleeping in the bunks showed them their mistake.

"All right, bose. What time's it?"

"Ten thirty, Tork. Tell th' rest of those blokes to shake it up an' get on deck. Hold Tenny's sore as ——!"

"Yeah?—" from Tork. "What is he sore about?"

"Aw, a couple o' bobbies come aboard lookin' for two blighters what they said 'ad got away from 'em. Hooch-pedlers, the bobbies said they was. Jake was on watch, and he told th' mite and the bobbies that the fellows 'ad come aboard and then slid down a line on to the string-piece and got awie. I think 'e was lyin' to save 'imself, 'cause Jake never could st'y awike on watch. I don't think hanybody come aboard."

Another voice, high-pitched and rasping, came from the door opening upon the deck.

"Bosun!"

"Yes, sir—'ere I am."

"Before ye come out close that 'tween-deck manhole. We don't wanta have the hol' full o' pilfered cargo afore we even let go. Dye hear me, bosun?"

"Ay, sir; close th' man-'ole. Closed it is, sir."

The heavy iron cover of the man-hole through which the Kid and Homer had just descended fell with a bang, and they could no longer hear the voices above. There was, however, a great deal of trampling about on the iron deck above their heads, but at length this, too, quieted.

"What does 'let go' mean?" asked Homer thoughtfully.

"Don't know," answered the Kid, "and I don't care, either. I just lost an automobile and three hundred dollars' worth of good Scotch whisky—that's enough to worry about. Anyway, it looks like we got away. All we gotta do now is wait until things quiet down and then beat it ashore. Might as well take it easy till then."

He groped his way to a pile of old canvas in a corner and lay down upon it.

"I wish I knew what he meant by 'let go'," muttered Homer.

HOMER BELL and Ted Harvey had been born, at about the same time and within a block of each other, in a section of New York noted for its lawlessness. They had grown up within the same environment: gone to the same school, "hung out" on the same corners, and made approximately the same acquaintances; but that environment, in Homer and Ted, had produced two men who were in no way alike, either physically or, especially not, mentally.

Ted was the alert, aggressive type, quick to act, quick to make a decision—but just as quick to change that decision and go off at a tangent; Homer was solemn, retiring, thoughtful—in one word, a dreamer. Ted could make a mistake, rectify it and begin over again while Homer would be turning the thing over and over, looking at it from all the different angles his argumentative turn of mind demanded. The former had the makings of an excellent business executive, while the latter would have done well as a researcher. Neither of these lines of endeavor presenting itself they took what offered.

Ted went into the prize ring, but soon, just as he was beginning to acquire a reputation as a "comer," he decided that there were less arduous ways of making a living and gave it up to become a member of a notorious West Side gang. With the gang his audacity and recklessness soon made him a contender for leadership.

Homer, upon leaving school, went to work. A friendly truckman offered to take him on as a helper, and he accepted; not because he had any idea that he would like the job—frankly, he hated it, hated all routine work, in fact—but because even his, at that time, immature mind could grasp the fact that it is less painful to work than to starve. To Homer that which one enjoyed doing, even though it be carrying bricks up a ladder, was pleasure, but that which was distasteful was work. He did not like to load and unload his employer's trucks, therefore it was work. He soon resigned and found another job; but it, too, was work, so he resigned again. And thus he went from job to job searching for work which was not work.

He became discontented, and as he grew older the idea began to form that there was something wrong with the order of things, that the industrial organization was not all it was cracked up to be. He began to talk about the "System," redistribution of wealth, equalization of opportunity. Ted, product of the same environment, was entirely satisfied with the "System"—in fact, he did not know there was such a thing; he merely decided to "get his" by hook or crook, and be —— to the rest.

And then came the war, and the call for men. Neither Homer nor Ted wanted to go—but go they did, nevertheless. Homer volunteered, so as not to be drafted; Ted was drafted because he refused to volunteer. Once committed to the service, however, the latter plunged into the business of being a soldier with the zeal with which he did everything—as though he were in a hurry to get the thing over and done with and go home. He left the training camp a corporal, earned the commendation of his superiors for his valor in action, and was discharged a sergeant—to return to the West Side and organize a "mob" of his own. Some of the "mob" became careless and allowed themselves to be surprized while in the act of leaving a silk loft with a truck load of silk, and were promptly sent to jail for their stupidity, whereupon the Kid took warning and went into the young but growing industry of bootlegging.

Homer did not earn any commendation, except in so much as he was a good soldier. He did what he was told to do; he ate what and where and when he was told to eat, slept when and where he was told to sleep; he stood up, or lay down, or rolled over at the order; he advanced and retreated and began firing and ceased firing without comment or dissent, in strict obedience to orders. He captured no machine-gun nests single-handed and led no forlorn hopes—the reason may be, however, that he had no orders to do these things, and Homer Bell was not the man to act without orders.

He had one fault; there was a question forever upon his lips the constant reiteration of which irritated his comrades and embarrassed his officers—he wanted to know what the war was all about. Many an amateur statesman or diplomat tried to enlighten him, he listened to many long and complicated discourses upon the subject, but, somehow, whether through his own lack of ability to comprehend or lack of lucidity in the explanations, he never was satisfied with the answers. He asked every man in his company the question, and would have asked every one in the division had the opportunity presented itself. As soldiers are often quoted as doing, he delivered himself of his thoughts before going into battle, words which, in this case, will NOT ring in the Pantheon of Time.

Before the battle of Verdun he said:

"I don't know why I am out here to kill Germans, and I don't believe they know why they are out here to kill me. I don't know what the war is about and I don't believe anybody else does. I think we're a lota nuts!"

He was discharged a private, still wondering what it had all been about.

He returned to New York and began half-heartedly to look for a job. Jobs were scarce and he began to experiment with the benches in Madison Square. It was very pleasant there—and it cost nothing. He figured to a day how long his money would last him; and he came to the obvious conclusion that upon that final day something would have to be done. His father had died and his mother had married a man between whom and Homer there was a mutual dislike, so he knew there was no help to be had from that quarter, even were he so shameless as to ask for help—which he assuredly was not.

So he sat upon his bench and watched curiously the multitude of people that hurried and scurried about him—like frightened ants, they seemed. He watched their set, anxious faces and wondered what it was that made them all hurry so. He wondered what it was all about.

ONE evening at dusk, in Twenty-second Street, Homer met Ted Harvey, whom he had not seen for some months. The Kid was resplendent in new and expensive clothes, prosperity stood out all over him. He wore a suit of good material cut in the latest style, a rakish soft hat, a pair of low patent-leather shoes; in his silk tie sparkled a platinum, diamond-studded horseshoe; upon the ring finger of his left hand was a two-carat solitaire.

The Kid ran his eye over Homer's worn attire, took in the run-down shoes, the frayed trouser bottoms, the coat sleeves shiny at the elbows, and smiled knowingly. He sat behind the wheel of a big touring-car.

"What's the matter, Homer?" he asked. "You look like you been up against it."

"Out o' work," answered Homer. "You look good—prosperous."

"Oh, so so. I ain't hungry. Are you broke—flat? I can lend you a century or two if you want it."

"No, thanks, Ted. I'm hoping something will turn up before I'm flat."

"Huh! If you want anything these days you gotta go out and grab it—nothing ain't comin' to you. D'you want a job, for about an hour—ten bucks?"

"Ten bucks for one hour! Sure. Where—when——"

"Jump in," said Ted, indicating the seat beside him. "I'll tell you about it on the way. It's easy work."

"See them cases?" said Ted when they had turned into Twenty-third Street, indicating several cases in the tonneau over which a rug had been thrown. "Three cases of Scotch. I got an order for six cases of liquor—three of Scotch and three of Martelle. I'm going over to one of the French ships to get the brandy now, then we'll go uptown and unload. I want you to give me a hand to handle the cases."

"Bootlegging!" exclaimed Homer. "I might have known. I don't want the job."

"What! You darn fool! Why don't you want it?"

"It's against the law."

"Well, I'll be ——!"

The Kid looked at Homer in amazement.

"Why, you been talkin' against the law all your life."

"No, I haven't. I've been talking against some laws, yes; but I'm for changing them, not for breaking them."

"Huh! That's what laws are made for—to break. If it wasn't for guys like me they wouldn't need laws, then look at all the poor guys what would be outa jobs: Lawyers, judges, law-makers—gee!—thousands and thousands, I guess. The crook is the cop's friend, because if it wasn't for crooks the cops would have to go to work. One man makes a law and another man breaks it; in that way there's jobs for all. If it wasn't for the prohibition law I wouldn't be makin' a thousand dollars a month. I'll be darned if I wanta see it changed."

"You're talking cock-eyed," said Homer. "I want to get out. Slow up."

"Not now," answered the Kid sourly. "Too many dicks pussy-footin' around. Wait till we get up to the ship; then you can beat it. You got a right to lay off the job if you want to, but—I think you're a boob."

"A lot of people have told me that," said Homer quietly, not in the least offended.

And then they went into West Street—and nearly into the clutches of the law Harvey scorned.

AT THREE o'clock in the morning the freighter *Hawk* was two hours south of Scotland Light on the beginning of a three months voyage to Central America and West Indian ports. Barnegat was nearly abeam and the loom of

Highland Light could still be seen over the starboard quarter. On the vessel's bridge were two officers, and a quartermaster at the wheel.

John McGuire, master mariner, turned to the second mate.

"She's all yours, Mr. Scott," he said. "I'm going to turn in. Call me if you want me."

"Very well, sir. Good night."

Mr. Scott glanced at the compass and resumed his pacing to and fro.

Captain McGuire started toward his quarters on the after part of the bridge.

"Oh, just a minute, cap'n," said Mr. Scott. "There's some commotion below, sir, in the fo'c'sle."

The captain swung about, returned to the wing of the bridge, and leaned over, waiting.

"What's the trouble down there?" called the second mate through his cupped hands.

There was no answer, but the scuffling and loud voices ceased.

Captain McGuire was a small man, and not very imposing in appearance; but there was an air about him that an experienced seaman would recognize instantly as that of authority. He raised himself to his full height to peer over the weather-cloth the second officer had rigged to suit his own greater height of eye. His voice was clear and ringing: a voice that could rise like the high notes of a bugle above the shriek of a ninety-mile-an-hour gale, and without effort.

"Below there! What's wrong?" he called. "Answer up!"

The answer came back immediately, in a Cockney voice:

"Two stowawyes, sir. Found 'em in th' for'rd peak."

"Bosun!"

"Yes, sir."

"Bring them to the bridge."

"Yes, sir. Comin', sir."

The captain waited quietly until the two stowaways were brought before him; then he took the binnacle-lamp from its hood and looked them over by the light of it. One was a tall, sandy-haired, slightly stooping young man who had good eyes and a rather pleasant face; the other was a shorter, stockily-built man of about the same age, dark-skinned, strong-featured, with defiant eyes and his chin thrust forward aggressively, angrily. The captain returned the binnacle-lamp to its place and turned suddenly to the boatswain.

"What's the matter with you?" he snapped.

The Cockney had been rubbing thoughtfully at his chin, and at the captain's sharp question he started, then grinned ruefully.

"He slugged me on th' jaw, sir," he answered, indicating the dark-skinned one.

"Well! Did you come back at him?"

"I started to when I come to, sir. That was just when you called."

"Hits hard, does he?"

"*I* think so, sir."

There was a trace of a smile upon the captain's face as he turned again to the stowaways.

"What is your name?"—to the shorter of the two.

"Harvey—Ted Harvey," answered the defiant one sharply.

"And what is yours?"—turning to the other of the two.

"Homer Bell, sir."

"Both Americans?"

"Both Americans, sir."

"You two are the men who escaped from the police, I suppose."

There was no answer to this.

"Why did you stow away?"

"We didn't stow away," blurted Harvey angrily. "Do you think we wanted to go to sea in your —— old tub? We went down there to—well, we went there, that's all—and some fat-head went and locked us in. What we wanta know now is: when are you gonna put us ashore?"

"Seven days from today you'll be turned over to the American consul in Colon. He'll send you back to New York."

"What! Seven days, and then——"

"Yes. And in the meantime you can pass coal for the chief engineer. I believe he has a man or two laid up with injuries."

"Not me," said Harvey. "I'll pass no coal."

"That's up to yourself; I can't force you to work. But when you get hungry enough to work for your food let me know."

"What d'you mean, hungry? I ain't no tramp lookin' for a flop and somethin' to eat. I got over six hundred dollars in my pocket—enough to buy all the grub you got on your rotten old tub, I guess."

"No, it isn't. This is a freight ship—I couldn't sell you a passage if I wanted to. To eat here, you must work."

The captain turned to Homer.

"How about you—are you willing to work for your food?"

"Not exactly willing," answered Homer; "but I always did find it better to work than to go hungry."

The Kid glared wrathfully at him.

"Send for the relief look-out and have him take this man to the engineer on watch," said the captain to Mr. Scott, indicating Homer. "And see that the steward gives him a place to sleep and something to eat. And this man"—motioning toward Harvey—"is to be confined in the——"

"I'll work," broke in the Kid sullenly. "But I ain't gonna forget you for this, Mister Cap'n."

"Have them both taken to the engineer," said the little shipmaster quickly, and he turned away.

"I think I know now what that fellow meant by that," Homer said thoughtfully as they waited for the man who was to take them below.

"Meant by what?" asked Harvey.

"By 'let go'. I think he meant——"

"Aw ——!"

The Kid snorted disgustedly.

KID HARVEY threw aside his shovel and painfully straightened his back.

"Good ——!" he growled. "This ain't a man's work; this is work for a gorilla—or one of those." He pointed to a stolid, half-naked Chilean fireman who was nonchalantly "slicing" the fire before him.

Six days of "four on and eight off" had started the Kid's body to protesting in a way he had never experienced before—and in a way he swore, once more upon land, never to experience again.

"He's a good man, that fellow—physically," said Homer.

"I could sock the head off 'im in a twenty-four-foot ring," asserted Harvey—"make 'im look foolish."

"But he can make you look foolish at shoveling coal," said Homer, grinning.

Homer's body had protested against the unaccustomed labor even more vehemently than had Harvey's, but his longer, softer, more pliable muscles had begun to harden and inure themselves to the strains of trimming and shoveling coal sooner than had the gangster's.

"I feel like going up to the captain and tellin' 'im to shovel his darn coal himself," said Harvey.

He looked speculatively at Homer. "What do you say—shall we?"

"Not me. I'm as good a man as that guy—" nodding toward the Chilean—"and I'm gonna prove it."

"I don't think you got backbone enough to quit," taunted the Kid.

"I've got too much backbone to let anybody think the job's too much for me though. Anderson, the chief engineer, says that if I wanted this job steady he thinks the captain could fix it up with the consul so that I could be signed on and be paid for it from the time I started."

"If you wanted it steady! Wowee! Do you want it steady?"

"I don't know," answered Homer doubtfully. "I can't say that I like heavin' coal, but—well, the chief says that he started as a coal-passer—and so did all the other officers in the engine-room. He says its tough at first, but you soon get used to it—and I guess he's right, because I'm beginning to feel better already."

"You're crazy as a billy-goat. This ain't no job for an American—you call yourself an American, don't you?"

"Coal! Coal! More coal!"

Two firemen began to dance wildly and point to their fires, as evidence that they spoke truth.

"Look, look!"

"Get it yourself, you greasers!" roared Harvey at them.

Homer bent to his task and soon completed the filling of the big swinging bucket. He trolleyed it to the space before the fires and dumped its contents upon the floor-plates, then returned pushing the empty bucket before him.

"You don't care who bosses you around, do you?" said the Kid, and he repeated his former question: "Do you call yourself an American?"

"I call myself a coal-passer," said Homer, "about a fifth-class one."

Eight strokes of a gong sounded in the engine-room.

"Five minutes more," said Homer. "Come on, Ted, be a sport; the watch is almost over."

In a ship's engine-room the "bells" are usually struck five minutes before the hour.

The four'o'clock relief came down engine- and fire-room ladders, and Harvey and Homer, with the others of their watch, climbed to the deck. They washed, and then strolled forward to await the call to the evening meal.

In the forward waist, Old Frank, A. B. seaman, the deck storekeeper, sat upon a hatch, working away with sail-needle and waxed sail-twine at a length of canvas.

He was old indeed, this storekeeper. His cheeks were lined and seamed, and tanned and scoured by the lash of many salt winds; his face was framed in a circle of short, gray whisker; his hair was iron gray, bushy and thick. There was a friendly lift to the corners of his mouth and his eyes were sapient with the wisdom that comes from much seeing and thinking. For all of his age, there was a great deal of youth in the wise old eyes and the wiry body. Those eyes could light suddenly with the merriest of twinkles, and the body could do the work his job demanded with a speed and a precision envied by many a younger seaman.

Homer and the Kid halted to watch the old man ply his needle: every thrust of the needle at an equal distance: the twine pulled taught and smooth at every stitch: the lap of the canvas nowhere differing so much as the breadth of a hair. It was the work of a master craftsman.

"Gee; you're making a good job of that," remarked Homer.

"Am I?"

Old Frank looked up at him. He nodded, agreeing.

"Yes; I am."

"Must be something particular—for the captain, maybe—you're so careful."

Homer looked at Old Frank questioningly.

"No; it's nothin' special," said Old Frank. "It's a bag I'm makin' for the mate, to hoist rubbish out o' the hol' in."

"What!" exclaimed the Kid. "You goin' to all that trouble—bein' so careful to make them stitches even, and all that—just for an old rubbish bag!"

"I always try to do a good job," said Old Frank calmly. "It's easier, seems like."

"Easier!"

Harvey stared.

"Yes. I like to do good work; an' when you like to do a thing, somehow, it ain't work. Leastways, it seems so to me."

Old Frank looked up and smiled.

Old Frank glanced at Homer, who was standing agape.

"Did you ever think o' that, son?" the old man asked.

"Think of it?"

Homer nodded vigorously.

"You bet I did! And it's true."

"It is. An' what do you think you'd like to do?"

"Me? Well, I don't know."

Homer pondered deeply for a moment.

"I think I'd like to know all about them engines down below—how they work, and what makes 'em go."

"You oughta get busy an' learn them. Why don't you?"

"Maybe I will."

Homer scratched his head and looked thoughtfully off over the sea.

The month was September, and the trade wind had brought that superb weather which is typical of the Caribbean from September to June. Rolling, ever-changing balls of fleece were sailing southwestward beneath a sky of deepest blue; a fresh breeze came out of the northeast and whipped off the tops of the lazy seas; the bow and stern of the ship rose and fell with a slow, oscillating movement, pitching and rolling easily in the sea that broke beneath the weather quarter.

This air of the Caribbean, somehow, was different from the air of New York. Homer balanced himself on his toes and gulped great draughts of it. There was no kick to the New York air, he thought; you simply breathed it without thinking of it at all; but this air—well, it was different; it had a *taste*.

"Great weather," he remarked.

"The weather at sea is always great," Old Frank informed him.

"Except when it rains, or snows, or storms, or some other darn thing," said Harvey sarcastically.

"Yes—" Old Frank nodded slowly, to emphasize his words—"it's great even then. I don't just know how to say what I mean, but—well, it does things to a man. Feller in a book I read one time says that no man ever went to sea but what he was changed some'ut by it. 'Bout right, too, that feller."

Harvey opened his mouth to say, "Bunk," but the words stuck in his throat; Old Frank, somehow, didn't seem the kind of a man one could say "Bunk" to. The cobbler ashore and the sail-maker at sea—both are noted philosophers. Tacking and stitching seem, somehow, conducive to thought.

"That captain of yours thinks he's a tough guy," said Harvey.

"Cap'n Mac?"

Old Frank smiled and glanced toward the bridge, where the little shipmaster leaned upon the rail, looking off toward the south.

"He is. That's why he's a good man to sail under."

"How's that?" asked the Kid.

"Well, you see, it's this way: When one o' th' boys get mean th' Old Man comes down and gives 'im a clip under th' chin; and that's all there is to it. Now, take the master o' th' *Gull*—sister ship to this one: When he has trouble with a man he puts 'im in irons, fines 'im a month's pay, and sends 'im to jail.

"Most fellers would rather have a clip on the jaw. I been eight years with Cap'n Mac, and ain't had no trouble with 'im yet—course he wouldn't hit an old feller like me anyway—because I know my business—and he knows it. And he knows his'n, too, son; I can tell you that."

"I'd like to see 'im hit me," said Harvey belligerently.

"Ho—you wouldn't see 'im."

The old man threw back his head and laughed.

"It's just bing bing, bing bing—and it's over. That's how he got his name o' 'One-Two' Mac—d'you get it?"

"Humph!" snorted Harvey, and he walked to the rail.

"When are we gonna get in?" asked Homer.

"Nine o'clock in the morning, I heard one o' th' quartermasters say. 'Bout right too, I think; 'cause——"

There was a sudden scraping sound below them, as though something were being dragged along the keel; and then the stern of the *Hawk* rose high in the air, higher than the moderate sea now running could ever have lifted her. The little freighter shuddered and listed bodily to port. The stern wrenched itself clear of whatever was beneath it; there was a subdued jar as something gave; then the ship plunged on, trembling.

* * *

"REEF!" some one shouted. "Reef! We've struck a reef!"

There was a rush of men from the forecastle and from below. They gathered in the forward waist and stared with questioning eyes at the little man upon the bridge. Some of them, mostly the younger men, looked frightened. A boy's voice, sharp and tremulous, cut the suspense like a knife. The voice wanted to know what the —— they were waiting for, why they didn't——

"Easy, lad, easy."

Old Frank's gruff growl abashed the messboy and sent him into the background.

"We struck no reef—but we struck somethin'."

The chief mate upon the bridge, had trained his binoculars astern, and all hands crowded to the stern to see.

In their wake a large object was floating, partly submerged; it still had motion given it by the *Hawk*, and was seesawing so that now and then one end or the other broke above the surface of the sea.

"A derelict—partly submerged," said Old Frank. "Bottom up—probably a schooner."

A great roaring voice came from the engine-room; the chief engineer, afraid of nothing in the world but that something might happen to his beloved engines and a reflection be cast upon his department, cursed his men back to their stations.

The stern of the ship was trembling and throbbing unwontedly from the thrash of the propeller; the speed through the water had lessened perceptibly. The men shifted uneasily as they sensed something wrong.

"Carpenter!" came the master's clear, cool voice from the bridge.

"Yes, sir."

The carpenter raised his arm to show his whereabouts.

"Take soundings—the after-well first."

"Take soundings, sir."

The carpenter hurried off for his sounding rod.

A bell jangled in the engine-room and the thrashing of the propeller ceased.

The third mate came from the bridge and the chief engineer from below. Together they went aft, and the third mate climbed the rail and leaned far out over the quarter, looked down under the stern.

"Tell 'im to give her a little kick, chief," said the third mate.

The engineer made a motion to the bridge; the propeller revolved half-heartedly, then stopped. The third mate again leaned overside.

"One blade gone," he said shortly, returning to the deck.

They went swiftly forward—the chief to

the engine-room and the third mate to the bridge.

The word passed quickly amongst the men: One propeller blade gone—what next?

The carpenter came from aft and bellowed to the bridge his finding—

"Ten inches of water in th' after bilge, sir!"

"What was the four-o'clock sounding?"

"Two inches, sir."

Eight inches of water in an hour! Impossible—the *Hawk* was noted for being a tight ship. Eight inches! The men looked overside. Imagination brought the water line much higher. The ship was settling already! The less experienced of the men stared at one another with frightened eyes.

The carpenter again came under the bridge.

"One inch o' water for'd, sir."

"And at four o'clock?"

"Three inches, sir."

In unison they breathed a sigh of relief. That was better. Nothing to worry about after all! And then the significance of it came to them. The ship was settling by the stern! That was it! The water was running from forward aft.

Some one shouted down the fire-room fiddley—

"You better clear outa there, you fellas; we're goin' down by th' stern!"

Then came from below the sound of revolt: Futile commands, profane defiance; men rushing to the ladders and fighting to be first upon them. The chief's great voice roared black damnation upon them; but they heard him not; he and his officers were left alone in the depths of the vessel.

Some of the men in the waist, seamen, stewards, coal-passers and firemen off watch, began to edge toward the boats. They began to walk—slowly at first, but each man determined to keep just a step ahead of his neighbor. And then they ran—scrambling, elbowing; each man striving to be first to the boat deck. Some of the cooler heads, "Big" Malley, a huge Scandinavian named Larkin, Old Frank, and the Cockney boatswain, shouted at them, calling them fools, but the panic-stricken ones paused not in their mad rush to the boats.

Homer and Kid Harvey did not join in the rush. The latter followed after them, to be sure, but merely from curiosity to see what would happen. He was quick-witted enough to know that by staying close to Old Frank and the more experienced of the men he could hardly go wrong. Homer disappeared—and though the Kid looked for him could not be seen.

The engine-room bell jangled and the *Hawk* began to forge slowly ahead.

The chief came running from amidships, brandishing aloft a coal shovel—a "banjo."

"I want men!" he shouted to all the world, "men to keep that mill goin'. And I'm gonna have 'em if I have to wear out this banjo on greasers' heads!"

He sprang for the ladder and mounted swiftly toward the boat deck.

The chief was nearly overwhelmed by a mass of struggling men that poured down the ladder upon him, each member of the mass, as before, striving to be first. A fear greater than that which had sent the men to the boats was now driving them away. The chief was carried along down the ladder by the weight of them; but at the bottom of it he found footing and struck out with his shovel, promiscuously—adding momentum to the retreat although he knew not what had started it.

"Down below you scum!" he roared. "Down below or I'll cut the heads off you. Get below, —— you; get below!"

He picked out his men and struck them again and again with the flat of his shovel, driving them before him to the fiddley, and into it and down the ladder.

Before entering the fiddley, with one foot over the sill, the chief looked back, curious as to what had caused the sudden rout of the men.

At the head of the ladder stood the little shipmaster, Captain Mac. His coat was buttonless, and hung loose, he was hatless, and his black hair, gray at the temples, was blown all awry by the wind; there was a triangular tear in one knee of his trousers. But he was smiling, crookedly; and the black eyes were glowing with a light that said the little man was not at all adverse to battle.

The chief grinned with sudden understanding, and waved a friendly hand before disappearing within the fiddley.

As the Kid had not joined in the rush to get to the boats, neither did he join in the rush to get away from them. As the crowd swept by, with the captain following close upon them and striking at the hapless ones who were forced to the rear, the Kid had quietly stepped behind a ventilator and let them go. When they had all gone he threw back his head and laughed heartily.

It was funny, this business of one man cowing and sending a mob flying before him—and not at all unusual. The Kid had seen it done before, more than once; and he thought he understood the psychology of it. He had seen a lone detective walk into a group of dangerous gunmen and arrest one of them, and get safely away by throwing a big bluff; he had known an elderly gentleman, held up by three gunmen, to successfully defend himself by holding a brier pipe in such a position as to give it the appearance of a revolver; he knew of cases where one man had held up the occupants of a crowded store while he rifled the till. He had heard that there were cases on record where one man had held up a passenger train. And the psychology of just such cases as these applied to this one.

Captain Mac, by the very impetuosity of his attack, by his supreme self-confidence, had over-awed the men and sent them running for safety. They were timid, anyway, or they would not have been so quick to make for the boats.

"This little guy is a wise one all right," thought the Kid. "Nervy, too. I give 'im credit—but— Ha, ha!"

He threw back his head and laughed again. He made his way below, unseen, still laughing quietly to himself.

WHEN the chief reached the fire-room all the fires but one were unattended; before that one a tall, stoop-shouldered youth was hoeing desperately and awkwardly at a dying fire, pulling the unburned coals from the sides to the center of it. The worn old reciprocating engine was pounding spasmodically, showing that the steam had already begun to fall. Through the open engine-room door the chief called to the first-assistant, at the throttle:

"How many turns's she making, Mr. Brown?"

The assistant glanced at the tell-tale before him and subtracted mentally.

"About twenty-two, sir—and she's wide open."

"Twenty-two turns! —— me!"

The chief swung upon his men with fire in his eye.

"Get to work, you scullions—and pop her off! If she don't pop in thirty minutes I'll be after you with my banjo again. I don't give a ——!" in answer to a muttered protest. "Keep that screw turning if she's already layin' on the bottom. I don't know anything about sinking ships; all I know is engines—an' how to keep coal-heavers heavin' coal. Slice 'em up now!"

"I got the pumps going, chief," volunteered the first-assistant from the engine-room. "The second and the third are in the bilges clearing the strainers."

"Good enough," said the chief.

The tall youth who had been tending the lone fire threw down his hoe and started for the ladder, but the chief put out a hand and stopped him.

"Who are you?" he asked, and stared full in the other's face. "Oh, yes—Homer—Homer somethin'. What have you been doing here, Homer? You're not on watch."

"No, sir; I'm not on watch."

Homer fidgetted and looked anxious to get away.

"I came down because I thought you'd need steam—and there wasn't anybody else below—and—and I did what I could——"

"And right you were," said the chief heartily, and he slapped Homer soundly upon the back. "That's the kind of stuff engineers are made of. Good lad!"

CAPTAIN MAC called the chief engineer, the chief mate and the boatswain to the bridge.

"How many turns can you get out of that mill of yours, chief?" he asked.

"Eighty-five, maybe," answered the chief. "That is, if I hook 'er up."

"H'mm. That'll give us about nine knots—with a broken propeller."

"Maybe," said the chief.

"You've got your pumps going?"

"Wide open, sir. I don't know how long I'll be able to keep them going before they get hot. They're old, you know, and——"

"I know."

The captain turned to the mate. "And how about the handy-billy, Mr. Tenny?"

"It's manned, sir. And drawin' good—so far."

"Could you find the place where the water is coming in?"

The elderly, watery-eyed mate spat wrathfully to leeward.

"Ay, I found it. It's the whole danged

hull. Might jes' as well try to plug a leak in a sieve."

"I thought as much. The *Hawk* is an old ship," Captain Mac said sadly. "I have never lost a ship."

He sighed deeply, gently placing his hand upon the bridge railing upon which he had so often leaned; then with his eyes he swept the worn little ship from stem to stern.

He straightened suddenly and brought his hand down smartly upon the railing.

"I'll be frank with you. The ship is sinking. But she's been a faithful little vessel and I'm not going to leave her while she's got spunk enough left to put up a fight. She's a thoroughbred, and she won't quit easy. I'm going to take her into port, if I can. But I can't do it alone."

He studied the faces of the three men before him.

"How about you, Mr. Anderson?" he asked, turning to the chief.

"I'm an engineer," said the chief hotly, "and I'll be in the engine-room to answer the bells as long as you're on the bridge to give them."

"I beg your pardon," said Captain Mac. "And you, Mr. Tenny?"

Tenny nodded sourly, without speaking.

"And you bosun—are you willing to do your best to get her in?"

"I am, sir," said the Cockney; "but I can't promise you anything for the res' o' th' lads—except Malley, an' Ol' Frank, an Larkin. We'll sock —— out o' anybody what tries for th' boats though."

"Good enough."

The captain became all business. "At four o'clock we had two hundred and eight miles to go to Colon. Now we have something less than two hundred. There is a current setting us south and west at the rate of one knot an hour—but we won't have it very long. From now until midnight we'll probably average between eight and ten knots. Nobody can say what we'll make after that. If I see we can't make Colon, I'll try for Porto Bello. Also, if we can get Colon by wireless, I'll ask for a tow-boat to meet us. That's all, gentlemen."

The little man nodded and smiled, and fell to pacing his beloved bridge.

The crippled propeller began to churn out its eighty-five turns per minute and the *Hawk* picked up speed. Thick gray smoke and live sparks came from the funnel and sailed off to leeward. Cinders and glowing embers fell in a steady shower to the decks, charring and smudging the clean pine planks. The ship throbbed with sudden life, and like a living thing it fought southward into the night.

And all night the fighting little master-mariner who had never lost a ship was upon the bridge, now pacing restlessly to and fro, now staring into the binnacle or working his calculations, now gripping the rail before him as though to help his vessel on. Watches came and went, but not once did Captain Mac leave the bridge, except to go to the chart-room.

Soundings were taken every twenty minutes, and, in spite of the pumps, it soon became common knowledge that the ship was doomed. The stern was now low in the water. The breeze had freshened to nearly a gale and great combers rolled over the weather quarter and roared down into the waist. By sunrise the unusual draft had reduced the speed to six knots—and ninety miles still to go!

OLD FRANK sat upon a hatch, tired and breathing hard from an hour of steady labor at the hand pump. Beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead, and his hands, tough and calloused as they were, were sore and stiff. Homer and Kid Harvey, just off watch, sat beside him upon the hatch. Nearly twenty-four hours had elapsed since the *Hawk's* collision with the derelict. The stern had continued to settle and the bow to rise, so that the decks now tilted at an alarming angle; so much so that the ship seemed at any moment about to slide stern first into the sea.

"Tough goin', lads," said the old man, wiping at his forehead with a large blue handkerchief. "I guess I ain't as young as I thought I was. Time was when I could pull an oar or swing on a handy-billy with any o' th' boys."

"Lot of darn foolishness, anyway," said the Kid. "What's he doin' all this for, I'd like to know. Why don't we get in the boats an' let th' old tub sink? The cap'n must be afraid of losin' his job."

"If he lost the ship th' company would give 'im a better job than he's got," said Old Frank. "Th' ship's insured for more than she is worth, an' th' company'd be glad to scratch 'er off th' books."

"We'd be picked up by another ship if we took to the boats, wouldn't we?" asked Homer.

"Most likely," answered Old Frank.

"Why don't we do it, then?" asked the Kid. "What's th' cap'n tryin' to save the ship for when he ain't got nothin' to gain by it."

"Well, One-two Mac never lost a ship; I guess that's why."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"I don't understand that myself," said Homer. "If he'd get a better job by lettin' the ship sink—why——"

Old Frank smiled queerly.

"You fellers talk like a captain of a ship was a factory hand," he said. "If you're workin' in a factory, and it burns down, all you think about is th' job you lost. If you get another job, all right—everything's fine; you don't care twopence about the factory. But a ship ain't a factory—that's the difference. A ship's got sense; it's like a smart horse. If you had a good horse, what had been workin' for you all its life, jes' for its keep, you wouldn't let it burn to death in a barn if you could get it out, would you?"

"Well," said the Kid, "if it was an ol' horse, not much good, I don't see why a man would take a chance just to——"

"You're a dirty gutter-snipe," blurted Homer. "And you're as yellow as ——; that's why you been packin' a gat ever since you was a kid."

"I'm goin' to punch you a-plenty for that," said the Kid softly.

With narrowed eyes and tight lips he slid down from the hatch.

Homer, angrier even than the Kid, met him half-way; but a neat, well-timed left hook to the chin sent him sprawling to the deck. He was up in a second, but another smash shook him up and dazed him so that he could not see his opponent.

Old Frank stepped in. He wrapped two wiry arms about the Kid's waist from behind and lifted him clear of the deck.

"None o' that, me young bucko," he growled. "I ain't very much of a fightin' man, but as old as I am, I think I can lick —— outa anybody as or'nary as you are. Let up now, or I'll use a belayin' pin on you."

He pushed the Kid to one side and held off the belligerent Homer.

"Get out o' this now," he said, and he pushed the Kid roughly from him. "You're not worth talkin' to."

The Kid looked at Old Frank. He looked at Homer. Then he strolled off, whistling insolently.

"Did he hurt you, lad," asked Old Frank of Homer.

"Not so much," said Homer.

He shook his head and jumped up and down to clear his brain of the numbing effects of the two blows.

"I got mine all right," he said grimly, "but Kid Harvey's got his to come. I won't forget him."

He dismissed the Kid with a toss of his head and turned to Old Frank.

"Say, Frank," he said, "I'm glad you told me what you did about—about this ship business. I never had a job that seemed worth working for, but this—this seems different. I'm beginning to get an idea what it's all about. When I was over in France fighting they said we were there to make the world safe for Democracy—I couldn't get that. But this—well—this *is* Democracy. Ain't that right?"

"Right as right," said Old Frank. "Men like that little feller up there—" he pointed to Captain Mac, leaning over the bridge railing, staring ahead—"and like Mr. Anderson, the chief engineer, they been fightin' for Democracy ever since they been old enough to go to sea. They don't look much like heroes, neither one o' 'em gives a hoot about gold braid, but they're mighty good men to have on a ship. When men like them feel responsible for the life of a ship, why——"

"I see," said Homer. "And when a man's got a job that he likes, and he knows what it's about, why——"

"Right as right," said Old Frank.

THE sun sank below the horizon; the tropic twilight came, and with tropic suddenness darkened into night. Great low-hanging cloud masses shut out even the brightest stars; the sky became lead-color, then sable, without a single relieving twinkle. The breeze died, became uncertain; light airs, hot, stifling, came from all points of the compass between south and east. Faint sheet lightning ripped along the eastern horizon.

The *Hawk* staggered southward like a living thing wounded to death; she had passed out of the current which had helped her along and now made hardly more than four knots. The men were fearful, anxious; there was much grumbling among them and talk of taking the boats by force. The wireless operator had thoughtlessly let slip the news that, owing to atmospheric conditions, "static," he had been unable to raise Colon.

Kid Harvey, from perversity more than anything else, sided with those who were in favor of immediate abandonment. He was for going straight to the boat deck, beating down what resistance might be offered, and lowering the boats.

"But you can't lower a boat while the ship's going ahead," one man protested. "And I can tell you now, you'd have to walk over One-Two Mac's body to get to that engine-room telegraph."

"We'll do that then," said the Kid boldly.

"You do it, brother," said the man; "this chicken won't."

"Nor me, either," said another one, and several others of the group chimed in, agreeing with him.

Kid Harvey looked at them contemptuously.

"All right, girls," he said, in a way meant to be cutting. "I go on watch in half an hour, and when I get below I'll shut her down for you. How's that? Say at one o'clock—it'll take me that long to scout around and find out how to shut 'er down. What d'you say?"

The mutineers nodded, eagerly. The strain of suspense made them desperate. It was agreed that at one o'clock of the mid-watch Kid Harvey, assisted by those of the engineer's force whom he could induce to follow him, was to stop the engine and disable it so that it could not be started immediately. Then they were to rush to the deck and join the mutinous ones of the deck force. The scheme was to be kept secret from the boatswain, old Tom, Larkin, Malley, and, of course, the officers and engineers. Homer, also, being a doubtful one, was to be left in ignorance of what was to happen.

"He's a sap, anyway," said the Kid of Homer. "If he wants to come with us, all right; if he don't let him go to —— with the rest of th' boobs what ain't got no better sense than to follow a crazy cap'n."

Homer was surprized, upon going below at five minutes to midnight, to find Kid Harvey there before him. This was strange, as heretofore the Kid had always been the last of the watch to arrive below; in fact, often it had been necessary to send some one to look for him. He was standing in the doorway that opened into the engine-room, gazing at the machinery and asking questions of the men as though much interested. Two of the men, firemen, were explaining something to him in low tones.

The new arrivals took over the watch and went half-heartedly to work. The tired old engine, under a full head of steam, was doing its feeble best to send the ship along, but the weight of water in the ship made even four knots an impossible task. Water had risen in the crank-pits to the level of the floor, so that every plunge of the piston rods sent small waves of it splashing and rolling over the floor-plates and into the fire-room. The decks were slippery and at an angle, and the men were sliding and scrambling about as they worked.

The chief engineer came below at half-past twelve.

"We'll be in before the watch is over, boys," he shouted above the pound of the engine. "We're past Isle o' Grande and the captain is going to run her into Porto Bello. Bend to it now, hump her along!"

The men scowled at him, and knowing glances passed from one to the other. There was considerable uncertainty among them. Within four hours they would be in harbor—so the chief had said; but would the *Hawk* remain afloat that long? They doubted that she would. They more than doubted; they knew by the feel of her that she was now settling fast, very fast. The chief appeared confident, smiled, spoke hopeful words—but he was lying to them. All engineers and mates were born liars anyway, they told one another. At the last moment the chief and his officers would dash to the deck and leave them—leave them to drown. What did American officers care for poor Chilean firemen. They spoke among themselves, watched the hands of the fire-room clock creep toward one in the morning.

Five minutes to one—two bells clanged in the engine-room.

Kid Harvey tossed his shovel far into the bunker. With decisive strides he strode through the fire-room, into the engine-room, mounted the short length of ladder to the lower grating, stopped abreast the main steam valve. In one hand he held a nine-pound maul which he had picked up before mounting the ladder. He laid aside his maul and strained at the eighteen-inch valve wheel.

The second-assistant engineer, at the throttle, looked at the Kid in surprize. He hesitated, thinking that perhaps the man was obeying orders given him by the chief. Queer—the chief had said nothing——

"Hey, chief," he called, "you goin' to shut 'er down?"

"What's that!"

The chief poked his head out of the shaft alley and stared.

The assistant pointed to the Kid, now tapping the wheel with his hammer to loosen it.

"Stop him!" roared the chief.

He sprang forward, but slipped on the greasy plates and went on his knees. A sudden lurch of the vessel sent him sliding toward certain death in the crank-pits. He clutched frantically at the foot of a ladder, caught hold, held on.

A revolver flashed in the assistant's hand. He fired twice: one shot went wild and the other chipped paint from the wheel in Kid Harvey's hands.

The Kid let go his grasp of the wheel and stood up. His eyes were vicious. He lifted his maul and sent it hurtling down at the assistant engineer.

The handle of the maul struck the assistant full in the chest. It sent him spinning into a corner, where he slumped to the floor and lay writhing. The revolver went into the crank-pits.

The Kid again bent to his task of closing the valve. The thread of the valve stem was long. It worked hard. He put all his weight upon it. The engine began to slow down, the pistons rose and fell with less and less speed. Then they stopped; the valve was closed.

"Quick!" shouted the Kid to the firemen who had crowded into the engine-room. "The maul! the maul!—to break the valve!"

The chief was up now. He leaped toward the ladder, began to mount, roaring curses and threats of extermination. The Kid threw himself at the chief, and together they rolled, fighting, to the floor of the engine-room. There they fought: the Kid with all the foul, vicious tactics of a born gangster the chief using his own superior strength and greater weight to advantage.

The men stood about uncertainly. Years of training forbade them using physical force against an officer, and for all their big words of an hour before they hesitated. Still, the Kid was calling to them to act. And the ship was sinking—they could feel it! Several of the bolder ones started forward.

Homer had been deep in the bunker, trimming the coal so that it would slide down into the fire-room of its own weight. The shots and shouting brought him out. He ran to where the men were crowded in the engine-room. He saw the chief and Kid Harvey struggling upon the floor, and leaped toward them.

The *Hawk* listed suddenly, far over to starboard. There came the rip and tear of lightning, close at hand. A sound as of countless steam whistles shrieked about them. A long roll of heavy thunder. Water came down the ventilators and splashed upon the fear-stricken men scrambling for the ladders. From all about them came the grind of rivets, and the hollow booming of buckling plates.

And then the lights died, went out. The engine-room became a black cavern in which men howled and struggled—and searched, searched for ladders, for doorways. Distances and directions had changed strangely since the extinguishing of the lights. The men kicked and elbowed, gouged, bit, and tore, fighting to gain the ladders and the deck.

The first-assistant came on to the upper grating. He held a lantern in his hand, and he peered below by its light.

"It's a squall," he shouted. "Stay below, —— you; we need power to fight this blow!"

He barred the top of the ladder with his body, tried to stem the rush of men. But the first of the fear-crazed ones beat him down, went over him, trampled his body into unconsciousness. The lantern flew into the air, fell from grating to grating of the engine-room, went out.

Homer found himself, somehow, at the foot of a ladder. He put foot upon the bottom tread, to mount, but he was brushed aside by two invisible forms, and a heavy elbow hurled him into a corner. He regained his feet and slipped and slid toward the ladder. He collided with some one and instinctively grappled to keep his footing. A familiar voice breathed familiar curses in his ear.

"Let go! you bum!" said the voice. "Let go, —— you; let go!"

A great bull-like voice, from some distance away, suddenly rose above the clamour.

"It's only a squall, you —— fools!" it shouted. "Back to your fires and gimme steam on this mill!"

To Homer it came like a dash of cold water. It was a command—

"Back to the fires!"

His fear fell from him. He tightened the grip of his arms upon the man before him, dragged him to the floor.

"The emergency lights," the chief was shouting now. "Throw in th' emergency switch!"

A match flickered, then died, but the chief's rough-hewn face stood out in the momentary glow of it. A match flared again, this time nearer to the switch board.

Homer held on to his captive in spite of the other's fierce struggles to get away.

THE *Hawk* had been hauled about and was standing in toward the lights of Porto Bello when the squall came down upon them. It was really a tornado, one of those sudden tropical disturbances, often called "arched squalls," which, although of short duration, are so violent that no sail can be shown to them. With the first fierce blast of the wind came lightning and torrents of rain, the last blotting out the shore lights and promontories. With no landmark to steer by the vessel was literally, like a blindfolded man, groping in the dark.

"Lights of the town are shut out, sir," warned the second mate. "Shall I haul out?"

"No, no!" Captain Mac called to him. "Make the course south, Mr. Scott—until we see something."

"But the reef, sir, the reef—Cocal Point!" The second officer's voice was high-pitched and anxious.

"South, man, south."

Captain Mac crouched in the lee of the weather-cloth and trained his binoculars ahead.

"South is the course," said the second mate to the quartermaster at the wheel.

"South it is, sir."

The man put down a spoke or two and peered into the binnacle.

Captain Mac threw back his head, cupped his hands, and called—

"Aloft, there."

From the lookout basket on the foremast came an answering bellow—

"Sir!"

"Can you see anything ahead?"

"No, sir. Not a thing."

Captain Mac shook his head, although the answer had been what he expected. The rain was so thick that even the forecastle head could not be seen from the bridge.

He suddenly realized that he no longer felt the pound of the engine. He sprang toward the engine-room voice tube.

The boat deck, aft of the bridge, became suddenly alive with swarming, shouting men, coming from all directions at once. They ran to the boats and began to cast loose the gripes.

Captain Mac plunged into the mass of them, striking out and sending those who blocked his path reeling with sharp, cutting blows that started the blood streaming from their faces. But the mutineers came at him in a body, and he went down. He was up in a moment, fighting, by the fury of his attack driving them from the boats they had started to swing out. For a moment he had them on the run, then they recovered and swarmed over him by weight of numbers, kicking and trying to put him out of the fight for good.

There was a streak of fire from the bridge, and the boom of a large calibre gun. Another explosion followed close upon the first. The men atop Captain Mac fell away and the little man staggered to his feet.

The second mate "broke" the breech of his shotgun and jammed in two fresh shells.

"Stand back, you scum!" he shouted, and he brought his weapon to bear upon them.

Captain Mac gazed about him in the darkness. His oilskin coat was torn to ribbons and his sou'wester, held by the strap beneath his chin, was canted over one ear.

"Why—why, the lights are out!" he exclaimed in surprize.

"So I've been trying to tell you for five minutes," returned the second mate. "No light in the binnacle to see the compass card by—can't see anything ashore—and no power. We could rig an oil light for the binnacle, but——"

"Breakers on the starboard bow, sir," came the cry from aloft.

Breakers! The men surged toward the boats, seemed about to charge in spite of the threatening shotgun.

"Look 'ere, Captain One-Two Mac," shouted a burly fireman, advancing pugnaciously. "D'yuh think we're gonna let you sen' us to th' bottom with this tub o' yourn? We're bein' blown on the rocks an' we got no power—an' if we don't go ashore th' —— ship'll go down by th' stern in about a minute. Look—look there!"

He pointed aft, to the poop, now so low in the water that the great waves rolling over with hardly a pause, had stripped it of everything movable. The ship was surely sinking. No one could doubt that. In a moment she would dive stern first.

"You fools!" cried the captain, "you can't take to the boats; you'd be swamped in a second. If I'd let you go when you first wanted to, you'd all be dead men now—dead; d'you hear!"

Three men came from below and ranged themselves beside the captain—Old Frank, big Malley, and the boatswain, all armed with iron marlinespikes. They threw in their lot with the captain's—but, never-the-less, they watched the stern with fearful eyes.

The rain ceased as suddenly as it had come.

"Light—dead ahead, sir," bellowed the lookout.

"Try the telegraph! try the engine-room telegraph, Mr. Scott," cried the captain. "Full speed ahead, sir!"

The second mate leaped to the telegraph. He worked the handle back and forth several times, rapidly. There was no answer, and he did it again—

Full ahead,
Full ahead,
Full ahead.

No answer. In desperation he threw more weight upon it than he intended. There was a snap and the handle worked free in his hand.

"No answer, sir," he cried, "and I snapped the wire!"

Captain Mac swung about. He took in everything at a glance: the wave-washed stern, the jagged, white-toothed reef yawning to leeward, the shore lights which had sprung out of the darkness at the passing of the squall, as if to mock him, to laugh at his helplessness.

He opened his mouth to give a command. The deck lights flashed on, their suddenness halting the words in his throat.

He waited, uncertain. The men pressed forward, held in check only by the shotgun in the second mate's hand. The men beside Captain Mac waited tensely, gripping their spikes, willing to fight but casting longing glances toward the boats.

"What d'yuh say?" shrieked the fireman, advancing again. "We got a chance in th' boats; we got no chance goin' down wi' th' ship."

He poised as though about to disregard the shotgun, and spring.

An extraordinarily heavy wave crashed down upon the stern, started the little vessel trembling from stem to rudder post.

"All hands abandon ship!" cried the captain in a voice that carried even to the man in the lookout.

The men jumped at the boats, all hands helped in swinging them out. Two boats on the lee side swung clear and were lowered to the waterway. Men piled in and shouted to be lowered to the water. Another boat swung clear, was lowered to the waterway and filled with men. Captain Mac took charge and coolly went about the delicate task of getting the boats safely away from the ship.

And then, just as he raised his hand to signal the men stationed at the falls to lower, the ship began to vibrate, feebly; then, as the men waited, staring at one another in astonishment, the feeble vibration swelled to a steady, familiar pound. The *Hawk* began to forge slowly, very slowly, ahead!

"Make fast your falls," Captain Mac cried to the men at the davits.

He ran to the wheel, threw the helm hard over, astarboard.

The ship answered, crept around to south-southeast, beat up into the wind, cleared the breakers thundering to leeward; then she limped painfully into the channel and passed into the shadow thrown by Otro Lado. She crept into the excellent, land-locked harbor of Porto Bello, far in, then swung hard to port.

"She's going down!" screamed some one, "she's going down!"

She did "go down." Her keel sank into the inviting ooze of a mud bank, in four fathoms of water; then the little ship leaned far to one side, slowly, shook herself and rested—like a tired race-horse that has done its best. But the propeller, still threshing mightily, continued to send great clouds of mud swirling into the clean waters of the bay.

"Stop the engine," shouted Captain Mac. "Ring off, Mr. Scott."

Then he remembered that the telegraph was out of commission and plunged down the ladder and ran aft.

CAPTAIN MAC ran into the engine-room, stood upon the upper grating and peered down. He could see no one below. He called. There was no answer. The machinery was squeaking and groaning, crying aloud for oil.

He descended and made his way to the fire-room door. At the threshold he paused, stared astounded at the scene before him.

Before the open door of one of the fire-boxes stood the chief, throwing coal upon the fire and spreading it with experienced twists of the shovel. He was naked from the waist up and his torso was covered with coal dust and sweat, and blood which ran from a wound in the back of his head. He was breathing hard and his knotty, muscular arms seemed heavy as lead.

From the starboard bunker came Homer, as sweaty and coal-begrimed as the chief. He was trolleying a bucket of coal, and at the bunker entrance he halted and called over his shoulder to some one within:

"If you stop work for a minute I'll kill you! I don't like to hit a man with a shovel, but so help me, Kid Harvey, if you even look like you wanta quit, I'll beat your brains out!"

"We're in!" shouted Captain Mac; but he had to repeat it several times before the chief turned from his fires: "We're in! we're in! we're in!"

"Eh?"

The chief turned slowly and stared at him.

"We're in—in harbor. We're snug in a mud bank just outside the careening cove."

"Eh? Oh!"

The chief's arms dropped to his sides and his shoulders drooped tiredly.

"You didn't ring off," he reproved. "I was waitin' for't."

"The wire snapped," explained the captain.

"I'm glad we're in," said the chief slowly, "because—I don't think—I could've—lasted—much longer——"

He slipped suddenly to his knees in the foot of water that eddied about the fire-room.

Captain Mac sprang forward and caught him.

"Will you shut down—the engine," continued the chief, "and tell the first—to haul th'—fires——"

He fainted, and his shovel dropped from his hand.

"He's wounded!" exclaimed the captain.

He and Homer picked up the chief and carried him to the engine-room. Captain Mac stepped to the engine and closed the throttle, bringing the machinery to a halt. The first-assistant, his head bandaged and one arm in an improvised sling, came below with some of his men.

"A nasty cut—but not serious," said the captain, examining the chief's wound. "He's too tough not to get over it."

"Who beat you up?" he asked, turning to the Kid, who had followed them from the fire-room.

The Kid scowled. He dabbed tenderly, with a handkerchief the captain handed him, at his nose, which was dripping blood. He seemed about to refuse to answer, but he changed his mind and blurted suddenly:

"He did."

He pointed to Homer.

"He threw me down in the dark and banged my face on the floor. Then, when the lights went on, he beat me on the back with a shovel."

"Yes," said Homer, advancing upon him, "and when we get back to New York, if you don't go to the district attorney and tell him I didn't have anything to do with that whisky-peddling deal of yours, I'm going to do it again!"

Homer turned to the captain.

"Is the ship all right, cap'n?"

"She will be," answered the captain, "when we spend a few thousand dollars for repairs on her. Why?"

"Well, the chief promised me a job—if we saved the ship. It's a good job, and—I like it."

Captain Mac smiled, and slapped Homer soundly upon the back.

GRAVES IN THE DESERT

by Harold Willard Gleason

HERE lies Slim Jones, who had no luck:
When hell bust loose, he didn't duck;
He had nerve, and he sang when blue;
Shun him, wolves—he was none of you.

Under this mound lies Bill McBride;
Careless he lived, and careless died:
Too much spur on an ill-broke steed;
Legs smashed; no water—just tumbleweed.

Here lies Hayne, who jilted a gal,
Cheated at poker and shot a pal;
An o'rnary cuss, the ace of squealers;
Here with his kin, coyotes and Gilas.

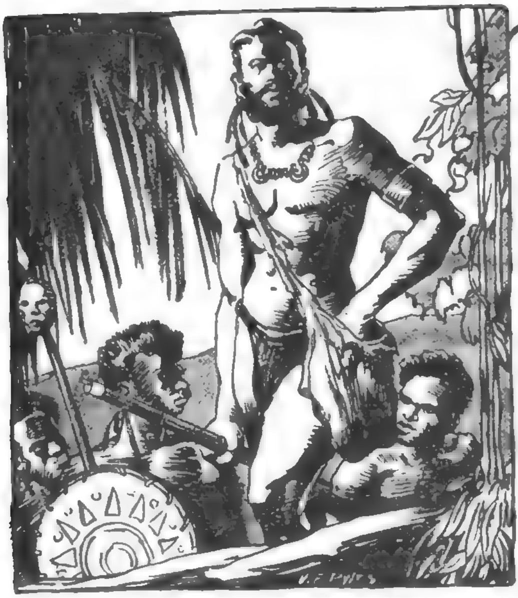
Steve Bell, below, has gone to perdition
For misdealing bullets—on suspicion.
If he'd known men as he knew critters,
He wouldn't lie here drinking alkali bitters.

Three feet down lies Dutch Van Best.
From New York City he came West.
He found the desert too crowded here;
Hence the bullet-hole below his ear.

Here lie the bones of Sheriff Dunn,
A mite too slow with his seven-gun
For a man so anxious to stock his jail;
A wingless buzzard—no more to sail.

* * * *

Here they lived, and when life was done,
Here, in the glare of sand and sun,
Where wild things hover and howl and crawl,
Graves in the desert shelter them all.



The King of No Man's Land

CONCLUSION

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "Thicker Than Water," "The Thirty Gang," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

BACK to back, three white men—McKay, Knowlton, and Ryan—fought doggedly against foes half seen. They had poor targets—a glimmer of steel; an arrow streaking from a clump of broad-leaved plantain; a dodging movement among a tangle of lianas.

It was an uneven fight, and when fierce yells announced the arrival of another party of savages, it seemed that the white men were doomed. And then the firing in the jungle diminished. From near at hand came sudden splashes, earthy thumps, grunts and snarls of grappling antagonists.

Running feet padded and the jungle erupted a figure as grisly as a buccaneer of the Spanish Main. Indians, all armed with spear and rifle, smeared with the blood of foemen, hard-jawed and slit-eyed, followed close behind him.

"It is José Martinez!" cried Knowlton.

"It is true," yelled José, his teeth flashing. "Welcome back my companions of days gone by. What a killing you have made here!"

"Yeah! And now ye come hornin' in and busting up the game!" snorted Tim.

"Then you shall join mine," retorted José. "But come, I must move."

A little later, after much bloody fighting, the four white men sat in the big hut of the conquered Jivero community, scowling at the roof-pole from which hung a score of human heads.

"We're looking for Rand," McKay said presently.

"Rand!" exclaimed José. "Your friend and mine. I have not forgotten. It was he who first brought you three into this part of the world. He disappeared while traveling in Brazil and you found him alive, but crazed by a bullet, among the cannibals of the Rio Javary, in Brazil. And you cured his craziness by hitting him over the head with a gun."

Knowlton nodded.

"He's disappeared again—we're afraid he's gone back to the jungle."

One of José's men brought in one of the women captives. She was not a Jivero woman but a prisoner brought from the country of the Huambizas away to the southeast. She spoke Spanish perfectly and—was very beautiful. Around her neck a gold cross was suspended. Her name, she said, was Nuné.

She refused to answer José's searching questions but the next morning, proving that she was not ill-disposed toward them, Nuné saved their lives by warning them not to eat the food prepared by the captured Jivero women—it had been poisoned.

By noon the party started back for José's stronghold. Five suns slid across the great green abyss and vanished behind the colossal wall of the Andes. Five nights whelmed the forest in blackness through which moved only the creatures spawned to prey in gloom.

On the sixth day they came to the wonderful domain José had made his own. A stronghold which was practically impregnable; a fertile, sunlit plateau peopled by healthy, intelligent people who called José "king."

"On the level now," said Tim Ryan after José had explained his system of government and his ambition to make his White Ones so powerful that they could exterminate the murderous headhunters of the jungle; "On the level now: Don't this king business make ye feel sort of tied down?"

"I ache for the voices and laughter of my own people," José said sorrowfully. "I am a white man. I am not an Indian. Yet among the Indians I must live; in the jungles I must die." He laughed harshly. "King? *Sí*, I have made myself a king and built for myself a prison."

"The King of No Man's Land," copyright, 1924, by Arthur O. Friel.

LATER Nuné told the men the story of her life; of how she had been stolen from her home by the Huambizas; of how a Spanish priest had instructed her and of how, when he had been killed by the savages, she had gone from settlement to settlement, unafraid, her only protection the gold cross given to her by the priest.

Further: she admitted that she loved a white man.

"He is," she said, "a leader of the Huambizas. He owns a gun and is a strong fighter. But he kills only men and will not shrink a head or carry off a woman. His eyes are green. In his hair is a white mark over the left ear. He is called Rana."

"Cripes!" muttered the Irishman. "It's him—Dave Rand!"

There was no doubt about it and, although the three friends were happy in the belief that their search was nearing an end, José was greatly disturbed. The Huambizas were his greatest enemies and, led by Rand, would be doubly powerful and menacing to the peace of his people.

"Rand must be made to see reason," he said, "otherwise he will be killed."

"Who by?" demanded Tim.

"If necessary—by me. Any man who joins the enemies of my people becomes my enemy. And a white man who joins the head-hunters is no more a white man. Before Rand are only two ends: Capture or death!"

Hard on the discussion which followed, came Lieutenant Montez, an agent of the Peruvian Government.

Montez offered José complete pardon for the crimes which had sent him into exile, reinstatement and high honors on condition that he helped Peru checkmate Ecuador's plan to seize the region east of the Andes and north of the Amazon.

It was a tempting offer but José's answer was:

"Say to your commander that I am king in my own land; that I will fight—not as a servant of Peru, but as king of a new nation; that I will remain king of my people and king of myself to the end."

Indignant, swearing to make the Huambizas his allies, Montez was escorted to the borders of José's kingdom by chosen warriors.

And then José hurriedly prepared to make war on the Huambizas, realizing that the existence of his people depended on its successful outcome.

The day of departure arrived. The guards doomed to remain at home watched the living stream of José's warriors, headed by their king, Nuné and his three white friends, pour through the rocky gorge and into the wandering track; watched until the army vanished into the vast green sea of trees beyond.

THROUGH the steaming jungles marched José's men, encompassing many dangers, surmounting many difficulties.

On the third day they attacked a small Jivero settlement and in one of the houses discovered a freshly cured head—the head of Lieutenant Montez. It was at this place that Tim, not wholly trusting José, arranged to go with Nuné and find Rand. But José, informed by his men, stopped them and, after much heated debate, admitted the three friends into his councils.

Later José succeeded in worming information from one of his Jivero prisoners.

"Listen!" José rasped. "Days ago the Huambizas attacked a Jivero place. This prisoner says it was the greatest Huambiza force ever seen. It is led by a white man who fights like a demon. They are striking toward my country. *Sí*, they may be already in it. While we sought a way to save David Rand, David Rand sweeps down on my helpless ones with an army of the fiercest murderers in the world."

"I take it we will be moving," was McKay's comment.

"*Sí!* We move now! We move east!"

And so the army doubled on its tracks; pushing on madly, racing against time; never resting, never slackening until they came to the *tunday* which marked the first outpost of José's kingdom.

And there, instead of the three signalers they expected to find, were their bones and the tracks of many men who had gone up into the hills.

Panic-stricken, José and his men pushed on at a still faster gait so that McKay, Knowlton and Tim, unable to maintain the pace, lagged behind, and made their way up the hills until they were well above the horde of struggling Huambizas and the men of José. From this point of vantage they dropped head-hunters in swift succession, until their rifles became almost too hot to hold.

José's men seemed to be gaining the upper hand and then, at the head of some Huambizas who were advancing toward them, Knowlton saw a white man.

"It's Dave," cried Knowlton.

"Yeah! It's Dave," echoed Tim. "And look, they've got another white man there."

The other white man was José, wounded, a prisoner in the hands of Rand and his head-hunters.

"Rana!"

Nuné clambered over the rocks and with glowing eyes, laughing happily, joined the man she loved.

And then McKay coolly drew a bead on his old-time partner, fired and Rand fell.

Then the three friends dashed forward and carried away José, Rand and Nuné before the Huambizas were able to realize what was happening. The Huambizas, lacking a leader, sought safety in flight, harried by José's men and the bullets of the whites.

"I suppose this ends our party," growled Tim. His long sigh of relief, however, belied his sour tone.

"Quit that, you fools!" Knowlton said sharply.

The eyes of José and Rand had opened and, oblivious of all else, the two chieftains were striving to choke each other to death.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE KING COMES HOME

THE Sumataras moved forward, glowering balefully at Rand. But the Americans were too quick for them.

"*Alto!*" barked McKay, leveling his rifle from the hip.

The menace of his gun and his steely eye halted the warriors. At the same moment Tim sprang at Rand and Knowlton at José. The grapplers were wrenched apart and held.

"Cut it out, Dave!" admonished Tim. "What the —— ails ye, anyways? Show some sense!"

Knowlton was voicing much the same

sentiment to José, with the added injunction to avoid straining his wounded side. The Spaniard snarled and struggled to break free; but, weakened by his injuries, he was easily restrained by Knowlton. Quieting, he glanced around, sized up his surroundings, saw his men beyond McKay and turned a triumphant gaze on Rand.

"So, Señor Capitán of the Huambizas," he sneered, "you are the prisoner of the White Ones whom you came to destroy, hah? You and your brave woman-stealing murderers caught more than you planned, hah? Welcome, *renegado*, to my hospitality! You have not yet tasted all of it!"

Rand seemed not to hear him. He lay supine, his green eyes wide, his strong jaw hanging loose, staring in stupefaction at Tim. He scowled, blinked, rubbed a hand across his brow and stared again. His gaze turned to Knowlton's blond-bearded profile, then to the uncompromising back of tall McKay. His lips moved twice before he spoke.

"Tim—and Merry—and Rod!" he marveled. "For —— sake! Where'd you drop from?"

"From the States, ye gorilla!" rumbled Tim. "Been thrashin' all over this here country lookin' for ye. Jest caught up with ye today—and cap had to nick yer dome to git holt o' ye, at that. How come ye knockin' round with them head-hunter guys? Gone cuckoo again?"

The green eyes dwelt on his a moment longer. Then they veered to Nuné, hovering near him. A faint smile flickered across his bewhiskered mouth.

"Maybe I have," he granted.

Then, his voice turning hard, he demanded in Spanish—

"Nuné, what have they done to you?"

"She is my slave," José maliciously broke in. "And you——"

"Shut up!" Knowlton snapped, exasperated. "Listen to me, José Martinez. You'd better sing small. Dave's not your prisoner—he's ours! Rod got him—not you, or your whole outfit! And what's more, you are Dave's prisoner! He dragged you right through the whole head-hunter gang, so helpless that you couldn't do that!"

He snapped his fingers.

"He could have cut you into sausage—but he didn't. And the only reason why you're here now is because cap clipped Dave with a bullet and carried him up these rocks in front of the whole Huambiza mob, and I carried you, while Tim held 'em off alone. These men of yours came along a good deal later, while we were taking all comers. For all the good your famous army did you, you were a dead one half an hour ago. I don't know who knocked you out first, but——"

"I did it," taunted Rand. "And I can do it again."

José reddened and started a lunge at him. Knowlton forced him back.

"You shut up too, Dave!" he warned. "Either one of you that starts anything more will have me to lick. That goes!"

"Yeah," seconded Tim. "And if that ain't good enough I'll take the two o' ye and crack yer cocos together. This here war's gone bust. Let it die."

"And one thing more," Knowlton went on. "This scrap has busted up, as Tim says. But it might be going on now—and going against you, José—if we three hadn't opened up the Huambizas with our guns and given your men a chance to cut off their left flank and roll 'em up. You left us away back in the woods, you may remember; but we've come in mighty strong at the finish, and we're still good for a lot more rough stuff if necessary. Now come off your high horse. Let Dave alone. Tell these Indians to get back and give us a free hand. We'll get you up on top. You're about done in."

Under this broadside José glared, growled, but gradually quieted. Suddenly he cackled shrilly:

"Ha, ha, ha—Ouch! *Caramba*, is a spearhead in my bowels? By ——, *teniente*, you have the nerve of the ——! You now will be the king and dictate to me, hah? But you speak sense—and, no doubt, truth. And I owe my life once more to you? It was you who saved me years ago in Brazil. *Bien*. I am too tired to walk now, so you shall help me. The Huambizas are crushed, yes? It is good. Let me rise."

Helped by Knowlton, he struggled up. Curtly he spoke to the Indians, who, though still held back by McKay, were eying the Americans ominously. One grunted in reply, and all their expressions changed.

"They will obey your orders—so long as you do not try to take this man Rand away," added José. "He must be held——"

His words grew indistinct. He leaned heavily on Knowlton, his knees sagging. When the lieutenant laid him down he fainted.

"All shot," said Tim. "Better git him to his women right away. One of 'em, I mind, is a doctor, and a danged good one. How 'bout you, Dave? Feelin' rocky?"

"Rotten headache," confessed Rand. "All right otherwise. Let go of me."

After a searching look, Tim lifted his heavy hands, and Rand arose. He stepped to the edge and stood a moment, surveying the scene of slaughter. Directly beneath him the fighting had ended, and he looked down on a battle-field strewn with warriors who would war no more. To the right remained only a small knot of his men, falling fast under the relentless hacking of three times their number of White Ones. Away toward the gap sounded the wolfish howling of more Sumataras cutting down their routed foes. The last brief chapter of his history as a Huambiza commander was rapidly reaching its conclusion.

As he turned back to the others, however, he seemed unmoved by the catastrophe terminating his recent lurid career. The concentrated gaze of his former partners, too, apparently had no effect whatever on him. McKay had moved inward and stood bleakly regarding him. Tim's blue stare was half-hostile; and Knowlton, now busy bandaging José with strips of his shirt, paused long enough to give him a searching look without warmth.

Now that David Rand was found, and caught red-handed in the act of commanding a lethal attack on the kingdom of a former friend, the dogged loyalty which had brought his other comrades to rescue him was turning cold. They were white men to the backbone, following white men's codes. He was a renegade, a leader of jungle murderers, a white savage who wore the stork and toucan ear-tufts, the tooth-and-claw necklace, the long hair and the tiny loin-clout of the head-hunter, and who had placed himself outside the white man's pale. Yet, knowing their thoughts, he stood calm, impassive, naked and unashamed.

To the unveiled enmity of the White Ones likewise he returned a steady, indifferent regard. His air was oddly Indian, rather than that of a white man; his face expressionless, his bearing stoically apathetic. His green gaze drifted over the little assemblage and then rested again on Nuné. He spoke no word.

Knowlton rose, shirtless and wiping his reddened hands on his breeches.

"He'll do," he said, nodding toward José. "Is the road clear below, Tim?"

"Yeah. Safe enough," judged Tim, after a look at the dying fight of the Huambiza remnant. "Them Warm Beezers are sewed up tight, far's I can see, and that path up the rock ought to be open for traffic by the time we git there. Le's go."

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OBEYING a few Spanish words from McKay, several muscular Sumataras carefully lifted their wounded king and, cradling him in their interlocked arms, sidled along the narrow way, grunting to those ahead to move. Reaching the path, they faced forward, raising their burden to their shoulders. Preceded by a vigilant vanguard of his fighters and followed by his captor and his rescuers, José rode down the path as he had come up it—unconscious.

As they went Rand glanced at each Huambiza body lying in the trail, shot down by Knowlton and McKay. Sprawling face down, huddled on their sides as if asleep, or staring sightlessly straight up at the hard hot sky, the dead savages lay as mute reproaches to the renegade white who had led them to their doom. José, under the same conditions, would have ground his teeth and luridly cursed the enemies who had slain his followers. Rand viewed them as casually as the rocks around them. His countrymen, covertly watching, could detect no change of expression, no flicker of emotion in his countenance. He stepped coolly over the dead and ambled onward without a look behind.

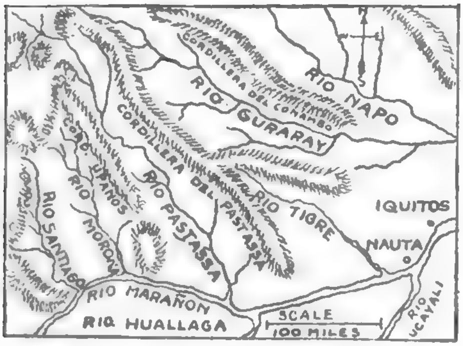
As they emerged into the cleared space, the vanguard, which previously had moved in file, bunched around the bearers, their spears and machetes and guns turned forward and aside as a bristling hedge against all comers. The ex-soldiers tacitly closed about Rand and Nuné, covering them on both sides and the rear from any blood-mad Sumataras who might assail the captured enemy leader.

The last feeble resistance by the overwhelmed Huambizas died out as the little band approached, and at once a horde of blood-smeared human wolves bounded at the whites, yelling in ferocious exultation.

"*Alto!*" roared McKay. "Your king lives. Lay no hand on his captives!"

The avengers slowed. All knew this hard-jawed Scot and his mates to be close friends of their king, and his words gave the affair a different aspect. The king lived; that was very good. And the white Huambiza was the king's captive, who would be dealt with in the king's own way at his own good time. The other white men were saving the prisoner for the king's personal vengeance. The Huambiza woman, too, who had been treated with such unseemly kindness, now was evidently an enemy prisoner also. No doubt the king would inflict dire punishment on them both. It was well. They certainly would not interfere with their ruler's plans.

Some of them turned away to search for any possible Huambiza survivors. Others hurried ahead to make sure that the cliff path was opened. More of them simply walked along as additional escorts, beginning to think of their women and children and hoping to find them safe on the rock.



Progress was slow, for the ground here was literally covered with slain, and small parties of Sumataras obstructed the way while they found and carried out their own dead and wounded. When the beginning of the cliff path was reached another delay was met; for now that path was alive with women and children of the White Ones, bounding down to spread over the battlefield and seek their own men. Sharp yells to the guards at the top, however, resulted in a stemming of the rush. Then the bearers and the whites began the ascent.

Silently they climbed. The path was slippery with blood, obstructed here and there by rock chunks dropped from above and by crushed and mangled Huambiza bodies. The sun, rolling far down, was turning red and casting a sinister glare through the thin haze still hovering over the scene of the fight. Its glow touched the drawn face of the limp King of the White Ones and then was gone, the file of climbers passing into the shadow of the curving precipice. And when the top of the rock was reached and the weary but still ready guards gave free passage, the shadow seemed to have spread over the entire summit, though the sun still shone. It was a shadow of silence, of solemnity, of somber looks from the people who stood motionless there and watched the battle-stained men plod past with their quiet burden.

Across the disordered little tableland marched the cortège, followed by a growing throng of those who had not yet descended the cliff path. Nobody spoke. A funereal quiet held the place, broken only by an occasional distant shout among the warriors down below. As the head of the column neared the family-house, a tall young woman in the regal feather-dress ran forward, and the escort made way for her to reach the side of José. She was Huarma, eldest of the nine sisters who were the wives of the king, and expert in jungle medicine. Wordless, she walked beside her mate, studying him. Then, still unspeaking, she turned on the pair of white Huambizas a gaze startling in its smoldering wrath.

Through his doorway passed José on the shoulders of his men, the low red sun shooting a final blast of heat over him before he vanished into the dusky room beyond. At once the other Sumatara warriors closed before the door, barring the way with bloody weapons. The whites unconcernedly wheeled to the left and marched away, heading for the council-house which had been the abode of the three partners. They reached it, entered it, and coolly took possession, without interference or objection by the guards. But, after they passed in, tall spearmen significantly took post before its only exit.

"You two are our prisoners," McKay laconically stated.

Rand nodded without comment, well aware that these three were his only protectors, but giving no sign of concern for the future. Squatting in Indian fashion, he clasped his hands upon his pain-racked head and was still. Over that bowed head Nuné, ignoring the Americans, extended her right hand and her gold cross, her lips moving soundlessly and her eyes full of tenderness. Then she sank beside him, timidly resting her other hand on his shoulder. He made no move.

So José Martinez, King of the White Ones, came home: struck down in his own stronghold, captured and kicked by the man whose forces he had masterfully gone forth to smash, borne like a corpse to the care of his women. And so David Rand, fighting chieftain of the Huambizas, reached the end of his power: a prisoner, yet a conqueror; escorted in his downfall by former officers of one of the greatest armies of the world, and doubly blessed by the winsome priestess of Piatzo.

CHAPTER XXIV

AFTERMATH

ONCE more the smokes of steadily-burning fires ascended from the green depths of the stronghold of the White Ones. Once more its men and boys moved ceaselessly along its shadowy paths, the men carrying lifeless bodies struck down by their weapons, the boys transporting fuel to replenish the flaming brands heaped high at certain designated spots. But now the fires were not preparing food for fighters, but consuming the fighters themselves; the burdens brought to them were not the little people of the tree-tops, but heavier, fiercer creatures born to prowl on the ground and destroy their own fellows. Though the gloating fantom of war had sunk again below the horizon, the somber smudges now darkening the sky were more truly a tribute to that evil spirit than those of a fortnight ago. They rose from human sacrifices to his red memory.

At the first light of a new day all Sumatara warriors still able to walk had taken up the vitally necessary work of cleansing their settlement—all, that is, except the worn-out but still watchful guards of the central rock. These latter, without ostentation but without the slightest relaxation of vigilance, held their posts at the top of the path and at the houses where rested their king and the five aliens. Every other male subject of José who could limp along and bear a weight was helping to purge his homeland of the hated Huambizas.

For the dead White Ones—and there were many more of these than King José could well spare—were built real funeral pyres, whereon the fallen warriors were laid with all honor and carefully defended from the flocking vultures until the torches were applied. For the Huambizas, the cremation-piles were thrown together as if for the incineration of offal; and the attentions of the winged ghouls to the head-hunters awaiting disposal were unchecked. Furthermore, the fires consuming the recent antagonists were kindled at long distances apart. Even in their mutual destruction, no Huambizas were allowed to mingle their ashes with those of Sumataras.

To only one of the White Ones was given a more dignified form of funeral—interment, in a great clay jar, beneath the floor of his home: the burial accorded to chiefs. This was Aillu, the grim commander of the White Ones of the king's eastern country. It had been he who led the onslaught into the Huambiza mass which later succeeded in cutting off the left flank; and, after smashing a red lane well into the army of Rand, he had gone down, pierced by half a dozen poisoned spears. Curac, of the perpetual smile, was still alive and grinning, though gashed from head to foot.

Meanwhile, in the little homes, the seriously wounded received the ministrations of their women; those for whom there was no hope stoically awaited the end, while those who were merely disabled heard from their mates the tale of how the horde from the west had burst through the barrier and assailed them.

The thundering alarm of the *tunday* drum at the cañon-entrance had given warning to the people of the bowl, and the terrific resistance of the guards on the cliffs had checked the irruption long enough to allow nearly all of the inhabitants to attain the virtually impregnable summit of the mesa. Of that fight at the entrance no witness now remained; only the mute evidence lying at the rocky rift itself was left to show how the combat had gone. During its progress the warders of the other entrance had remained at their posts, awaiting a similar attack on their side—an assault which never came, as the Huambizas evidently were ignorant of the existence of another portal in the mountain rim. Spreading out after crushing their way through the cañon, the head-hunters had scoured toward the rock fortress beyond, finding only the abandoned Jivero women, whom they left temporarily unmolested.

Meanwhile the women and boys of the

White Ones, reaching the summit, had hastily taken up any available position for defense. All had a passable skill in the use of jungle weapons, and there was a plentiful stock of such weapons in a storehouse on the mesa. These, under the cool-headed direction of the wives of José, had been rapidly dealt out; the fighting queens had armed themselves with rifles and ammunition from the private arsenal of their Spanish lord; and the guards, rushing all their reserve cartridges to the garrison-hut commanding the cliff path, had concentrated their attention on the work of holding the pass.

Then had come the head-hunters—and met a rain of arrows, spears and bullets from the top. For a time there had been comparatively little action on their part; they had kept themselves covered in the trees and reconnoitered all around the citadel, seeking the most vulnerable approaches. At length, finding that there was but one passage and that their howled insults failed to goad the supposed men at the summit into descending, they had concentrated on an attempt to rush the shelf as they had rushed the gate.

From that time—about midday—until midafternoon, when the panting forces of José burst like a thunderbolt upon their backs, the Huambizas had fought with inflexible determination to win their way up, and the defenders to crush them down. Rush after rush had failed, but again and again they came. The women, levering away rock after rock from the wall at the edge, had toppled them into the mass or down on the slippery shelf; the ready guards had riddled all who rounded the turn near the top; and still they tried, with a tenacity astounding in men of the head-shrinking tribes—who usually have no stomach for a long fight with heavy losses. They seemed to be not only devoid of fear, but driven by a commander who cared nothing for casualties.

For a long time the defenders had been virtually unscathed. The head-hunters had few guns, and most of their arrows fell short, struck harmlessly on the stone, or fell weakly into the soil beyond. Three boys were killed—one by a slug, two by poisoned arrows. But toward the last of the fight the guards began to suffer from a nagging rifle-fire. Some man below, with a good gun and an accurate eye, had located exactly the right angle for deadly work; and, despite the protection of their elevation and bullet-proof side-walls, two of the defenders of the path were killed and three wounded.

The shooting of the unseen marksman was timed to coincide with new advances up the shelf, and was obviously intended to aid the rush of the men storming the top. But for the unexpected return of the Sumatara warriors, he might have eventually killed all the gunmen holding the citadel and thereby assured a Huambiza victory. It was strongly suspected—and, indeed, was true—that the enemy sharpshooter was the white chief of the marauders, now held captive in the house of the king.

Thanks to the fact that the Huambizas did not scour the northern portion of the vale, the few women and children who failed to reach the cliff in time to climb it escaped capture, fleeing to the heights beyond and hiding there until the battle was over. On the other hand, the guards at the northeastern entrance, who undoubtedly would have been unharmed if they had stuck to their stations, were killed to a man. They were no skulkers; and when it became self-evident that no enemies were nearing their own cañon and that a furious assault on the citadel was raging, they forsook discretion for valor. Dashing to the scene of conflict and keeping within the cover of the trees, they drove arrow and bullet into their foes until hunted down and beheaded. That devoted little band sent at least five times its own number of enemies ahead of it over the Long Trail.

AND now, while the smoke of the aftermath sullenly arose and the things which had been men crumbled into ashes, the two rulers, victor and vanquished, lay in neighboring houses and gave no thought to what went on around them. José, drained of nerve force and vital fluid, slept or drowsed while Nature and Huarma combined in the work of restoration. Rand, who had gone uncomplaining and uncommunicative to his hammock, now had developed a burning fever and a wandering mind. Each of them was watched continuously by a woman—José by Huarma, in command by virtue of her medical skill and her seniority over her eight sisters; Rand by Nuné, who, deprived of the privilege of seeking jungle herbs of which she knew, could only hover beside him and try again and again the efficacy of her cross and her naive hypnotism, which seemed strangely unavailing.

Each, too, was visited by Knowlton, who had bandaged José among the rocks and dressed Rand's split scalp after reaching the top. Queen Huarma and her sisters now had heard the tale of how the yellow-haired Northerner had snatched José from under the very noses of the Huambizas, and had also been told that her lord's last command had been that this man be obeyed; wherefore she received him with marked friendliness and allowed him to look at the comatose patient.

The chief impressions which the visitor took away were that the side-wound was a nasty one, but was receiving treatment which probably would result as well as if administered by a civilized physician; that the other injuries were minor in themselves, but had let out much blood which could not well be spared; and that José had a fighting chance and was doing as well as could be expected.

On leaving, he had taken the occasion to mention the fact that José virtually owed his life to the action of McKay in shooting Rand and to Tim's lone-handed battle to cover their retreat; also to intimate that Rand was insane. The first was intended to lodge in the mind of the militant queen—who undoubtedly would take command if José should die—a feeling of obligation to both his partners; the second, to provide a possible line of eventual escape for Rand. He happened to know that the White Ones usually were very chary of harming an insane person.

Concerning the physical condition of Rand he felt no particular anxiety. The fever seemed to be the common jungle sickness, due mainly to the exposures and hardships of the long traverse, and brought to a head by the battle and the bullet-wound; dangerous if not properly treated, but curable by rest and stiff doses of quinin, of which the medical kit held plenty. Externally the head-wound was hardly worthy of the name, only a small section of the scalp having been torn away, and the gouge being easy to clean. There could be no question, however, that even so light a clip by the high-velocity bullet had dealt a stunning shock to the brain. The odd previous history of this man, who once had been crazed for five years by a similar shock and then restored to sanity by a blow with a gun-butt, made his future mental status a problem which bothered all three of the men who had caught him.

They were a sober trio as they sat at the council-board of José that morning, speaking only at intervals, their eyes straying occasionally toward the king's empty chair, then veering toward the doorway leading to the rear room where Rand tossed and muttered. McKay was even more taciturn than usual—in fact, almost morose; for in his memory rankled Rand's last look at him.

"You did this, Rod?" he had said, one hand resting on the bullet-groove which had downed him and wrecked his power.

McKay had nodded shortly, and for a moment gray and green eyes had fronted each other unwinking. Then, without another word, Rand had moved away and lain down in his hammock. But the expression in the green eyes had stabbed to the depths of McKay's unbending soul. It was the look a man gives to the one whom he has trusted and found to be a traitor.

"Wal," said Tim, breaking a silence, "life's jest one dang thing after another, as the feller says. We been tryin' to git Dave, and now that we got him what do we do with him? And is he cuckoo or ain't he?"

"He's as sane as any of us," declared Knowlton. "Or he was, until today."

The red man nodded, scowling at his cigar.

"Yeah, that's what I think," he admitted. "He was steady as a rock yesterday. So that don't give him no alibi for this Injun stuff. But say, mebbe he'll be nutty now from that bullet-crack, and if these gorillas o' Hozy's let him go we can git him away and then bust him one over the bean and knock him sensible again, like we done before. Seems like one smack makes him bug-house and two makes him bright."

McKay grunted dissent, and Knowlton shook his head.

"No chance," he disagreed. "It happened once, but never again. Such things are more rare than lightning striking twice in the same place. If Dave goes off his nut again now he'll have to stay that way. As for what we'll do with him, I don't know any more than you. Depends altogether on how things shape up."

Two nods answered this. With Rand and José both knocked out, the next moves must depend altogether on developments.

So, like the humbler people of the little kingdom, who turned their eyes and their thoughts ever and anon to the tall rock even while clearing away the débris of war, the three bronzed and bearded men at the king's table could only wait: wait for Piatzo, or the other jungle gods, to decree the fates of the stricken King of the White Ones, the fallen leader of the Huambiza—and the girl who had swayed the lives of both.

CHAPTER XXV

THE SHOWDOWN

ANOTHER day lighted up the domain and folkland of King José: a land scoured clean of Huambiza pollution, and a citadel from which a numbing shadow had been lifted.

For days the work of removing every vestige of head-hunter occupation had progressed, the Sumataras combing the byways and the tree clumps and the rock-heaps for any bodies or bones hitherto overlooked, and the smoky fires consuming even the Huambiza weapons and personal ornaments torn away in the fight. Then had come torrential rains, washing every stone and leaf and pounding into the soil every ash. And now, aside from the fact that some of the native warriors lived only in memory and others lay helpless or moved with difficulty, the green bowl was as it had been before its men marched away.

In the little homes the mothers carried on their family tasks, and on the plantations the Jivero women toiled as became their lot; for the slaves, fearing the dreaded Huambizas far worse than their present masters, had barred themselves into their stockade during the battle and voluntarily returned to their usual labors afterward. Up on the heights overlooking the entrances, new guards had taken post; and out at the isolated *tunday* stations beside the main trails, freshly appointed operators watched and listened for the renewed approach of foes. Their vigilance went unrewarded, for the surviving head-hunters were far away and daily fleeing farther.

From the royal mesa to the outer-most listening-post had spread the cheering word that the king had rallied and was fighting his way back to strength. The lacerated side-wound which had been his worst menace now was drained of any incipient infection and beginning to heal, and the other injuries were giving no trouble. Just how he had received that stab under the ribs nobody knew—not even the victim himself. It had been dealt in the thick of the fight, just before his encounter with Rand; and, judging from its appearance, it might have been inflicted by a jaggedly broken spear-haft in the hands of some head-hunter. At any rate, it was not poisoned, and all indications for his recovery now were increasingly favorable.

Meanwhile, Rand had recuperated more rapidly and completely than José. His rambling talk had ceased, his clouded eyes had become clear, his impassive manner had returned. Awaking to full consciousness, he had found himself once more a white man, so far as externals went; for, while his mind wandered, Knowlton had calmly removed the barbaric ear-tufts and necklace and clout, cut his hair and beard close, and put on him a shirt and breeches donated by Tim, whose stocky build approximated that of the sick man.

Except for an odd look on finding himself bereft of his savage ornamentation he had given no sign of any feeling. Nor had he, either during or since his sickness, revealed anything of importance concerning his recent mode of life or his reasons therefor. His fevered mutterings had been incoherent and often unintelligible, and since then he had been almost wordless, except to the faithful Nuné, with whom he talked briefly at intervals in the Huambiza jargon. To his three former partners he was as much of a mystery as ever.

And now, in the big outer room, he was on trial before those three. Facing him across the massive table, McKay sat, flanked on either side by Knowlton and Tim; the captain cold and straight, the lieutenant leaning on his elbows, the sergeant lounging negligently but keeping his eyes steadily on the prisoner. Rand, a little thin from his recent illness, sat calmly meeting the searching gaze of the men who once had rescued him from hopeless misery, had later led him to a fortune—and now had come back to cast him down again. Behind him, loyal as ever, stood Nuné.

Knowlton spoke:

"Dave, it's time for a show-down. I think you know how we feel. We came down to find out what had become of you. We've found out—and we half-wish we hadn't. You know what I mean. And——"

"No. I don't know what you mean."

The interruption came with such unexpected quickness that the others started. Across the inscrutable countenance had leapt a flash, into the green eyes had flared a light, that surprized them as would a gun-shot in an apparently lifeless thicket.

"Huh?" exclaimed Tim.

"You heard me. I don't know what you mean by horning into my affairs. I don't know what you mean by taking sides with José and against me; by helping him to hold a white girl prisoner; by fighting my men and shooting me—from ambush, like —— cowards!"

His self-constituted judges sat speechless, staggered by this frontal attack. As the concluding epithet sank home, a red wave swept across their faces and their eyes narrowed. McKay's mouth became a thin line. But then, slowly, their heads turned toward one another, moved by a simultaneous thought. Three slight nods were followed by a silence. Rand broke it.

"Wrong. I'm not crazy again. My mind is better than all three of yours together. I know enough to mind my own business. You don't."

Knowlton winced. McKay scowled. Tim looked troubled.

"Since when have you been my keepers?" railed Rand. "By what right do you trail me thousands of miles and shove your oar into an affair that lies between me and another man? Who are you, to set yourselves up as my judges?"

Tim, once Rand's bunkie and canoemate, thumped a heavy fist on the board.

"By cripes, he's right!" he asserted. "Jest what I was tellin' ye before we started west. When we'd found out Dave was alive and goin' strong I told ye we hadn't no call to butt in and we better haul in our horns and beat it. But then Hozy——"

He paused, frowning and rubbing his chin.

"But then José," sneered Rand, "knowing I might come after him, wound you around his thumb. You trotted along with him like good little boys. You won his fight for him. You shot me for him. You——"

"That's a lie!" barked McKay, leaning forward with fists clenched.

The last thrust had pierced to the rankling sore spot on his soul.

"A lie!" he repeated. "I shot you because that was the only way to get you, you fool!"

"Which changes nothing," retorted Rand. "You shot me for José. He wasn't good enough to get me, so you got me—when I wasn't looking. Don't see how you came so near missing me. Guess you're not so good as you used to be. Getting old and shaky."

The taunt deepened the scowl between the captain's bushy brows, but a blank expression grew beneath them. For a moment he stared. All at once he sat back with a mirthless chuckle.

"Missing! Old and shaky! Ye gods!" he snorted. "Look here, you idiot, do you think I shot to kill?"

"Of course. What else?"

Another silence, while the three stared first at him and then at one another. Then Tim rumbled:

"Wal, whaddye know about that! No wonder he's sore on us. Hey, lookit here, Dave, git this straight:

"Cap never tried to kill ye. He done jest what he aimed to do—knock ye out a li'l while so's we could git ye clear o' that head-hunter gang. Talk about shootin'! Me, I can shoot some meself, but I'd never dast try a hair-splittin' shot like that. Cap jest creased ye; and then he jumped into them there Warm Beezers' faces and spit in their eyes and drowned 'em, so's he could git ye safe into the rocks. And he lugged ye up there, with this here woman o' yourn tryin' to gouge his eyes out while he done it, and the whole howlin' mess o' hellions tryin' to git him from behind. That looks like he was shootin' to kill, don't it? Say, feller, who's been feedin' ye lies, anyways? Looks to me like there was somethin' rotten round here."

This time it was Rand who frowned. It was a frown of bewilderment, almost of incredulity. His head started to turn toward Nuné, but he halted the movement, still studying the belligerently honest Irish face.

Knowlton, watching shrewdly, spoke up.

"Looks to me as if we needed a complete house-cleaning. You were pretty woozy after that crack on the head, I remember, and the only one you've talked with since then has been Nuné. She's a fine girl and she means all right, but there are a good many things she doesn't understand about this matter, and what she's told you has naturally been biased by her own ideas. If we're ever going to have that show-down and have it right, all the cards have to be on the table. We'll lay ours out first and then look at yours. Fair enough? All right. Now here's what we've done and why we've done it."

For nearly an hour he talked, giving Rand the exact truth: narrating the course of events since their departure from the States, making plain the reasons for all their moves, explaining completely how and why they had been allies of José. Through it all Rand sat silent, various expressions dawning on his face, then fading out. At the end his gaze dropped and dwelt unseeingly on the broad mahogany board.

FOR some time he sat thus, his face unreadable, one hand absently fumbling at a shirt-button as if some subconscious impulse prompted him to remove the white-man garment. At length he looked up again, regarding his quondam partners with a steady gaze from which the bitterness had melted.

"Thanks, Merry," he said in an altered tone. "I apologize. Ought to have known better. But I've been living lately in a world of treachery and suspicion—trusting no man—finding no man worthy of trust. Got the habit, perhaps, of believing the worst of everybody. That's not an excuse; merely a possible explanation.

"I can't lay out my cards as easily as you did, or make them as plain to read. They're unusual cards; you never saw any like them before. Maybe you can't understand them. It's taken me a long time to read them myself. The best I can do is to try to give you the general idea."

As he spoke, the others unconsciously settled back in relaxation. The man now talking was not the harsh head-hunter, nor the sphinx-like captive, but the old Dave whom they knew.

"First let me ask you a rather unnecessary question that may help you understand what comes later," he went on. "When you were in the States did you ever feel inclined to come back to the jungle?"

He was looking squarely at McKay.

"Sometimes," admitted the captain.

"I know. So did the rest of you. I remember one of our little reunions—just before you sailed for Europe, Rod—when we half agreed that we'd come back sometime and explore the Tapajoz river, south of the Amazon, just to see what sort of fellows the Munducuru Indians were. We didn't care anything about the Mundurucus. We just felt the jungle call. We said we'd do it sometime, whenever we got fed up on civilization. I'm just recalling this to remind you how the jungle life calls a man back.

"Well, I didn't say much then. I let you fellows do the talking. But I was already fed up; restless; dreaming about the wilds down here; aching to get back. You may remember that I wrote a few articles about the Amazonian aborigines which attracted some attention. I tried to tell myself I was doing it to further scientific knowledge. But I wasn't. I was doing it because my thoughts kept revolving around this region down here, and the writing was a partial outlet for those thoughts.

"The outlet was too small. It was like trying to relieve pressure on a dam by boring a gimlet-hole in it. The little trickle that came through did no good. The pressure kept on increasing. By and by the dam broke."

He paused, searching the faces of his auditors.

"That's a muddy explanation," he deprecated. "I'm no professor, with the gift of making things clear. But maybe you get my drift."

"Sure," nodded Knowlton. "We know what that kind of pressure is. The only way a fellow can ease it is to go out and get action. You had to break loose and come south."

"Exactly. I stood it off as long as I could. Then I had to come fast. Didn't see any reason for dragging you fellows into it—two of you were out of reach anyway, and Tim was bucking the stock game—By the way, Tim, how did you make out?"

"Went broke," grunted Tim.

"So? Tough luck. Not surprizing, though. You're too honest for that game.

"Well, I came south, alone. Had a desire to see just what sort of people the Jiveros were. Knew I was likely to lose my own head, but took a chance. Been taking chances ever since.

"I had a plan, of course. Also an excuse. My excuse—to myself—was that it would be a valuable contribution to science to obtain all possible information about the head-shrinking tribes. My plan was something like this:

"I would find some town where some of the Jiveros came to trade, as they sometimes do. When any of them came in I'd give them some presents; tell them I wanted to visit them; let them carry news of me to their people; get on the right side of them and gradually ease my way into their country. As insurance for my life, I'd promise them more presents—things they'd give their eye-teeth to get—to be delivered to them *after I returned* to the town I set out from. I'd play up those presents all the time I was with them, keeping it in their minds that if they killed me they'd never get those wonderful things. Since those gifts would be worth a good deal more to them than my head would, I'd have a decent chance of living to keep my promises. Sounds crazy, of course. Still, it might have worked.

"From what I could learn at Riobamba, I figured Macas as my best bet. Started over-land with a young army of Quichua packers bossed by a half-breed *capataz*—foreman. Followed the old Upano trail—hundreds of years old, and horrible going; it runs south from Riobamba to the lakes where the Rio Upano starts, then cuts east through the mountains, flanking the Upano more or less, and ends at Macas. I never reached——"

"Wait a minute," interposed Knowlton. "We heard that you came down the Pastasa and were seen at Ambato——"

"Somebody lied. I never saw Ambato. Never saw Macas, either. That half-breed *capataz* was a bad egg. Steered me away to the south of Macas, on a branch trail. He and the whole gang quit me in the night, with most of my equipment. But he got his. Months later I found their heads and my plunder in a Huambiza house."

"Yeah?" chuckled Tim. "So that's why yer gang never come out, hey? Them Warm Beezers done a good job that time!"

Rand nodded, a grim smile quirking his mouth.

"Right. They settled my score for me. Also, they got for nothing all the fine presents that were to be my insurance. I was left in a beautiful pickle. If I'd been a green explorer, as that *capataz* thought, I'd be dead long ago, as he intended. He didn't know I had once been a jungle Indian for five long years.

"It didn't take me long to find out what I was up against. I didn't know where Macas was, and I wasn't fool enough to throw away my life trying to find out. I was completely lost, and I knew it. And I knew I had to do one of two things—remain a white man and die like one, or turn Indian again and live like one. And so, right then and there, I did a backslide.

"I went the limit. Found a brook, made a little hang-out, and cached everything I had left—clothes and all—except knife and gun and cartridges. Went naked. Found a hole among the trees and sat in the sun awhile every day, tanning myself, toughening my skin. Made bow and arrows to save cartridges and hunt quietly. Got plenty to eat, and saw nobody. Killed several *tigres* and made a claw necklace and armlets. Killed some toucans and a jabiru stork and saved the feathers. Before the half-breed turned crooked he had told me that any Jivero who wore ear-tufts made from these feathers was a great hunter—those two birds are hard to get, you know. So I made ear-tufts, pierced my lobes with thorns, kept the holes open until they healed, and then wore the feathers. Yes, I went the limit.

"Why? Because I'd determined to visit the Jiveros anyhow. Since I couldn't be a white man and live, I was going to be a thorough Indian—and a he-man Indian with hunter's badges and everything. And what's more, I was having the time of my life. I even quit thinking of myself as a white man playing Indian—I *was* Indian. It came easy. I enjoyed it. The only trouble was that I was lonesome.

"When I was ready I quit my hang-out, carrying nothing but weapons and a hide bag full of cartridges. Followed the brook to a creek, and the creek to the Rio Morona. Scouted down the river; found another creek showing signs of use; went up that; found a Huambiza tribe-house; looked it over; saw that it looked peaceable at the moment; and walked right in and made myself at home."

Again he paused, a slight smile of reminiscence lightening his somewhat set expression.

"Ye sure had yer nerve, feller!" breathed Tim. "And what'd they do about it?"

"Nothing. Crowded around, made faces, jabbered, wrangled about whether to kill me, but let me live. Huambizas are human. Curious as children. I was a freak: a white Indian with green eyes. Their eyes are always black or brown. They wanted to know all about me before killing me. I kept them interested. Talked mostly by signs, of course. Lied like ——. Told them I was a Mayoruna from the Rio Javary. Said I got the gun and cartridges from a white man I'd killed. They believed that, because I wore the expert hunter's ear-badge. If I was a top-notch hunter I must be a good man-killer; that's how they reasoned.

"The chief figured I'd be a handy man in his gang. Tried me out first at hunting. I made good. Then his outfit went on a raid into Jivero territory, across the Morona, taking me along. Jiveros never were my friends, and I was more than willing to shoot 'em up. I did my share of fighting, and more. The raid was a huge success, and I was high gun. But I took no heads or women; let the chief and the medicine man have my share. That made them like me all the better. After that I wasn't watched so closely. Could do about as I pleased.

"What really pulled me through, though, was my Indian training years ago; my ability to be really Indian and speak, act, think Indian. There isn't one white man in a million who could have put it over. But I did.

"I learned practically all there was to know about the Huambiza customs, beliefs, mode of living, head-shrinking process, and so on. Could have escaped down the Morona without much difficulty, and gotten home via the Amazon. But I hardly even thought about it. The scientific world—even the white man's world—might as well have been on another planet.

"I had back-slid a good deal farther than I expected to or intended to. I had gone back several thousand years. I, David Rand, wealthy, educated, socially eligible, and so on, had ceased to be even a white man. I was a savage. I was content to remain a savage. With the way to the white man's world open before me, I couldn't take it.

"I couldn't go back!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE THROWBACK

"DO YOU actually mean to tell us," demanded McKay, "that you liked the life of those infernal head-hunters so well that you couldn't break away from it?"

Rand sighed, as if facing a hopeless task.

"I was afraid you wouldn't understand," he said. "As I told you, this is something you never met before. It's totally outside your experience. Mine, too. It's only lately that I've been able to understand my own make-up.

"When I tell you I became Indian, you don't quite follow me. You think I mean that I was still Dave Rand of New York, *playing* at being an Indian. But I mean that *I was Indian*. By 'Indian' I don't mean a redskin; I mean a primitive man: the same kind of man our white ancestors were in pre-historic times. They were savages, like the present-day red or brown man whom we call 'Indian'. I am that kind of savage.

"Listen. Every one of us is the descendant of thousands—perhaps millions—of ancestors. Every one of us has in him certain characteristics inherited or acquired from his immediate ancestors, and others handed down to him from his remotest progenitors. Now and then a child comes into the world who is altogether unlike anybody born into his family within the memory of recent generations. He remains different all his life; his mental make-up is a mystery to his people, and usually to himself. The fact is that that man is a throw-back to some forgotten forefather. Perhaps his dominant characteristics are those of a very early ancestor. Let him get into an environment that fits those characteristics, and he may revert completely to the original type. He is an atavism.

"That's what I am. An atavism."

A short silence ensued. McKay and Knowlton watched him with thoughtful frowns, turning over this revelation in their minds. Tim looked blank, but asked no questions. All waited for the strange man, whom they had known so well and yet so little, to go on.

"When I was a youngster," Rand resumed, "I was always restless. Got into the roughest games I could find. Got into a lot of fights. Had no use for girls. There are plenty of boys like that. Usually their folks tame them down as they grow older. Mine tried to. They didn't understand me. Plenty of money, social position, and all that; and they didn't approve of my rough tendencies—wanted me to be a 'nice boy'. I did the best I could, for their sakes. But my best wasn't very good.

"We traveled every Summer—Europe, Egypt, other regular places—but I was always dissatisfied and bored: hungry for something, some other place, without knowing just what I wanted. After college I traveled on my own hook; saw Japan, Asia, and so on; still bored. Didn't know enough to come down here. I'd been brought up to move in the usual expensive beaten paths, and didn't know any others.

"Then I did get down here—and had five years of ——. But here's the point: I lived through it, where any other white man of my set would have died. When I got hit in the head by a bullet and my brain went foggy—my expensively educated white man's brain—I became a wild jungle man without the least difficulty. And I lived that way for five years. That prehistoric man inside me, who had been driving me over the earth hunting for some place where he could be content, came into his own. He was crippled, weakened, but he pulled me through.

"When you knocked white-man ideas back into my skull I was glad to go home. Even now, I never want to see that Javary region again; I suffered too much there. But before long I was restless, and when you chaps decided to try for gold down here I came along. And for the first time in my life I felt at home. Thought it was because I'd spent so long a time in the jungle before. Now I know better. It was thousands of years older than that.

"But I was still Dave Rand of New York; one of four civilized white men. Constant association with you fellows kept me civilized. When you were ready to go back, I went. I remained David Rand, white man, until I was here alone—completely cut off from anything civilized; surrounded by aboriginal influences. Then my environment was right: the savage life, absolutely primitive conditions. I back-slid the whole distance. My atavistic self got control.

"It wasn't a question of liking the head-hunters, Rod. I don't like them; don't like their ——ish head-shrinking. But aside from their murderous tendencies—and perhaps even there—their life is that of our own primitive white ancestors. They war, they hunt, they attack and are attacked by man-eating cats and huge reptiles, just as your forefathers and mine did in bygone ages. This part of the world is still in the raw. It—it's *my* world!"

It was Knowlton, more sensitive and sympathetic than his companions, who nodded as Rand stopped, glancing from man to man.

"I think we understand, Dave," he encouraged. "Go on."

"Well, I stayed. But I had my troubles. I still was not a Huambiza; I was a Mayoruna, an outlander. Other warriors were jealous. They watched for their chance to do me in. I knew it. Saw I had to make myself top dog or go under. It would take too long to tell you how I fought my way up. I worked fast — no half-way measures—and got control. After a while I had a big gang jumping when I snapped the whip.

"Since they live to fight, I gave them plenty of fighting. What's more, I chanced on a jungle drug that makes men absolutely fearless. Caught a medicine-man drinking it before a fight and bullied the secret out of him. It's a root called *kaapi*, and a little drink of the brew from it will make a dwarf feel like a giant. Gave it to my men after that, and there was no stopping them when they went into action. It wears off after a while, of course, but the usual jungle battle doesn't last long.

"Between the *kaapi* and the natural ferocity of the Huambizas, we licked every outfit we tackled. I got a big reputation, and fighters came in from all around to join my crowd whenever a raid was afoot. We warred altogether on other native tribes—Jiveros and Antipas—and kept away from the towns. The men were always itching to tackle a town—Macas, for one—and get Spanish heads and women. But I held them off. Kept them fighting their own natural enemies—dog eat dog."

"You couldn't quite get away from your white blood, then," interjected McKay.

"Maybe not. But I didn't go through any mental struggles about the ethics of attacking or not attacking a town. I was the prehistoric man, doing as he pleased. I pleased to fight Jiveros and not to fight whites. If the people of Macas, or any other place, had made me their enemy I'd have jumped them like anybody else."

His eyes had narrowed again, and their defiant gleam showed that he knew this declaration would damage him—and that he did not care.

"I see." McKay's tone hardened. "And why did it please you to turn your fiends loose against your old partner, José Martinez? Were you offered any inducements by Peru, for instance?"

"Inducements? I don't know what you're talking about. Peru is nothing in my life. I hit back at José Martinez because José Martinez had taken from me the one thing in the world that I cared about!"

"You mean— Hm! You mean Nuné?"

"I mean Nuné."

FOR the first time since the conference had begun he glanced upward at the girl. All through the talk she had stood soundless, tireless, her steady gaze fixed on the faces turned toward her Rana, her quick perceptions seeking to interpret expressions and tones. Now she looked questioningly down at the man whom she had long ago acknowledged as her lord. With a wordless gesture he indicated that she should sit beside him. Obediently she sank on a chair.

"I mean this girl," he repeated. "I've never been a woman's man. You know that. I learned early to see through the hypocrisy and selfishness and artificiality of 'the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady', and the older I grew the more hard-boiled I was toward women. But—well, blood calls to blood, after all. This young lady's as white as you are. Do you know her history?"

Nods answered.

"All right. When I knew her over west I was sorry for her. I thought that was all my feeling amounted to—just sympathy. After she disappeared I woke up. I realized then that she was the only real girl I'd ever known, and that she was *my* girl. I had to find her and kill the man who had taken her. I went on the war-path in dead earnest.

"Jiveros took her away, you know. I went after the Jiveros rough-shod. But we lost all trace of her. Finally we found some women who knew about her. They said she'd been captured from the Jiveros by the Sumataras and taken east. The Sumataras had wiped out their place and carried off all but four of the women. Those four had been found by Jivero men and brought to the settlement where I found them——"

"Begorry, them's the women that tried poisonin' us!" Tim broke in. "Remember, looey? Hozy made 'em stay behind. And lookit what come of it! If he'd killed 'em, Dave would be pokin' round the bush yet. And Hozy wouldn't be in hospital, and a lot o' his gorillas would be livin' instead o' gone up in smoke, and— Gee, wouldn't them women give us the laff if they knowed how they got back at Hozy! But listen here, Dave, did ye know them Sumatarries was Hozy's outfit? If ye did, whyn't ye jest send him word, or——"

Rand gave a short, harsh laugh.

"Send word how? By whom? A Huambiza? Or go myself, as a Huambiza leader? Would any Huambiza live long enough to reach him? Humph! Are you forgetting that José and all his crowd—and you too—were on the war-path against me?"

Tim was silenced.

"I knew it was his crowd, of course," Rand went on. "The women said four white men headed his gang—bearded men with guns. They also said one of the white men—the leader—took Nuné as his woman. I never thought of you three as the other men. Thought they were Spaniards—probably outlaws—who had joined José and fought for him.

"When I heard that José had carried off Nuné I just tore east. Raided another Jivero settlement, took prisoners, made them guide us to this place——"

"Well!" exclaimed Knowlton. "That was just what José did, trying to find you."

"I know. Well, I came, I saw, and I conquered—almost. I captured José, and if you hadn't knocked me out I'd soon have found out what he'd done with my girl.

"If you still think I had no business to attack José, think again. Had I any reason to doubt that he'd taken Nuné as his own woman? I once saw him take five wives at once, and four more later on. One more wouldn't strain his conscience. I knew he was consistently running off Jivero women as slaves. It looked pretty obvious that he had taken Nuné as his property—one way or another. And neither he nor any other man could get away with that while I could find him!

"And remember again that he went on the war-path against me. Why? I'd never harmed him. I didn't steal his women. I kept off his grounds. I was just as much his old partner as he was mine—but that didn't prevent him from starting west to smash me! And he started because he was afraid! He was afraid I might become as big as he was, and afraid to give me the chance!"

The accusation sank home. The three looked at one another, remembering José's own statement that he must crush the Huambizas before they became too powerful; that Rand's fate must be "capture or death." Rand went on, his mouth tightening and his eyes beginning to blaze.

"José Martinez brags that he is a son of the *conquistadores*. He is swollen with the idea of being a *conquistador* too. He fights to make a kingdom for himself and his half-breed sons. He grabs like his brutal ancestors. He kills, he takes women slaves, like the Jiveros! And when he finds that an old partner of his is getting some power too, he forgets partnership—friendship—everything but his own ambition. What I did to him was no more than he was trying to do to me, with less reason. And yet it sticks in your tender crops that *I* struck at *him!* You, who claim to be my friends——"

He broke off, clamping his jaws to repress further denunciation: his civilized sense of fairness struggling with the unreasoning rage of his primitive self. He knew, since Knowlton's explanation, why these old-time comrades had done as they did; yet his enmity toward José, still alive, impelled him almost to include them again with the Spaniard. The atavistic side of his nature, given free rein through recent months, was cropping out strongly again. And the three across the board, studying him, grudgingly admitted that his analysis of himself was true.

The Rand whom they had known had been a taciturn man schooled in repression; a dogged, quietly likable fellow who never quit, never complained, never lost control of his temper. This man whom they now saw was the one whose existence they had never suspected: the hot-headed aborigine, slow to forget and slower to forgive, who had been imprisoned so long within the shell developed by refined environment. That shell now was broken. Could Rana, the primitive, be brought again under the control of Rand, the civilized?

"You're not quite right about José, and not quite right about us, and you'll realize it when you think it over," Knowlton said quietly. "But we won't argue that point at present. We see your side of it now—you could hardly expect us to know all this until you told us. But the big point isn't what's gone by, but what's to come. You sure had a rip-roaring time as a head-hunter chief, but you've reached the end of your rope. If we can get you off this prison of a rock, the only sensible thing for you to do is to go home and make the best of it. You can take Nuné and have her educated——"

The expression in the green eyes made him pause. It was a contemptuous, pitying look, as if he were a defective child babbling nonsense. When Rand again spoke it was in a cold, controlled tone, his sentences close-clipped.

"Not a chance," he said. "Nobody can leave this rock alive until José says so. So far as I'm concerned, he won't say so. I'm done. I've hit him too hard. He'll take his revenge. There'll be an execution, and I'll be through.

"If I could go back to the States, I wouldn't. I've found my home—the jungle. I'd stay. Neither would I educate Nuné in the shams and shames of civilization. She's real. I'll keep her so.

"Wait. Don't talk about my money and so on. Let it rot. All money ever did for me was make me discontented. I can't use it here. Let civilization have it. That's all civilization wants—money.

"I've talked enough. Too much, perhaps. Now it's all said. So I'll go back to my room with my wife."

He arose, motioning Nuné toward the inner door. With a sidelong caressing glance she moved away.

"Your—what?" exclaimed McKay.

"My wife."

Rand moved calmly after her.

"We savages—we atavisms—don't bother with clergymen and church mummeries. Especially when we haven't long to live. We mate. But since Nuné likes to be a priestess, she has married herself to me with her cross. Our marriage went into full effect several days ago. That's all."

Through the doorway they passed, vanishing down the corridor. At the outer portal a couple of lurking watchmen drew back and were gone. At the king's table McKay and Knowlton and Tim looked speechlessly at one another. There was nothing more to be said.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MISTS BREAK

MIST, streaked by sun, eddied around the royal rock.

The houses stood blurred, half-seen. The bowl below was a void in which, as the filmy folds of fog shifted, the nearer trees sometimes loomed vaguely, then vanished again. The heights beyond were, so far as the eye of any look-out could perceive, wiped from existence.

Rain had fallen in the night, as it fell every night now, growing heavier as the weeks rolled by; and the rising sun was engaged in its daily fight to rout the beleaguering ground-fogs as the White Ones had cut apart the Huambiza horde. To the three yawning men who strolled along the edge and cast bored glances out into the blankness, it seemed that many a long and weary moon had elapsed since the last battle-yell of that racial fight had died out. And there was no indication that their stay there was nearing its end.

"Yo-ho-ho-hum!" yawned Tim. "Same ol' stuff and no hope in sight. Everything foggy, even when there ain't no real fog round here. I mean we dunno nothin'; no more'n we knowed six weeks ago. Dave's a human clam—ain't spoke a hundred words since that day he told the hist'ry of his life. Hozy won't see nobody; we dunno what he's figgerin' on, or even how he is. And we've got to stick 'round till somebody or somethin' moves. Me, I'm so sick o' this dump I feel like divin' off and takin' a swim in that there fog."

He summarized the situation and the sentiments of the other two. Except for one more call by Knowlton on José—at which the lieutenant had candidly and thoroughly explained the change in Rand—the Spaniard had not been seen by any of the Americans. He had listened in silence, but his hard eyes had boded no good for the white Huambiza. And so, though the three adventurers knew they could go unhindered whenever they willed if they would leave Rand behind, not one of them would budge from the rock. They were determined to be in at the final settlement, and, if necessary, to line themselves up solidly behind Rand. But the monotony of waiting was increasingly irksome.

Rand himself knew nothing of Knowlton's tentative mediation with José. When the blond man visited him in turn, the first mention of the Spaniard's name had evoked a growl so savage that the would-be peacemaker desisted from further talk. And since that time he had been as intractable as any Indian. Attempts by all three of the northerners to revive his interest in the doings of the outside world had failed. He even ate his meals in the room allotted to him and Nuné, never appearing at the table where his countrymen habitually dined.

Now, as usual, the three plodded halfway around the rock in their before-breakfast stroll, inhaling deeply, walking off the sluggishness born of the heavy night air. Then, cutting across, they headed back toward their quarters. As they approached the house, McKay squinted ahead and lengthened his stride.

"Guards are gone," he pointed out.

It was true. For the first time since Rand had entered the house, no spearmen flanked the doorway. A quick look flashed between Knowlton and Tim. They quickened their gait to a lope.

"If them guys have pulled any dirty stuff while we was out—" growled Tim, his fists closing.

He left the sentence unfinished, but curt grunts of agreement followed it. They entered the house at a run.

"José!" ejaculated Knowlton.

José, wan and thin, but smiling at their surprize, sat in his great chair at the head of the board. The pair of missing guards, and four others besides, stood behind him; motionless, statuesque, their lances still as if planted in the ground.

"*Sí*, it is I," bowed José. "May a poor cripple sit at your table?"

"Faith, he can that, if he don't eat too much," grinned Tim. "But do we have to feed them guys too?"

"Not so," laughed the king. "You need not even feed me. I am not yet hungry—for food." The mirth died from his face as he added: "But I have hunger to settle a certain matter now—at once. It has waited too long."

The faces fronting him froze. For a moment the three stood motionless, searching his grim visage, running their eyes over the sinister spearmen.

"A bit early in the day, isn't it?" suggested McKay. "Plenty of time after breakfast."

"True. But I eat better when nothing is on my mind." An enigmatical smile flickered and was gone. "So I shall dispose of this matter first and have it finished. Shall I send these—" he motioned toward his soldiers "—to the room of the man Rand, or will you bring him?"

"We'll go."

The captain's voice was chill. He strode inward, followed by his comrades. The going of the trio was somehow reminiscent of their landing at the raided Jivero settlement on the Yana Yacu—the same aggressive stride, the same compact formation, the same turning of backs on José. And as they went, the sharp eyes of the king studied those backs, and under his bold black brows gleamed an odd light.

Down the passageway marched the Northerners, halting before the closed door of Rand.

"Dave!" McKay called bruskly. "José is here. Wants to see you. Come out when you're ready."

An instant of silence. Then a grunt from within. They faced about, stepped back, entered their own room. Unspeaking, they picked up their pistol-belts, buckled them about their hips, briefly inspected the weapons, reholstered them—and left the holsters unbuttoned. Each looked squarely at the others. Then they strode out.

Rand's door opened. From it emerged a nude figure, shoving a hand backward through its black hair, purposely bristling it into unkempt disorder. It turned, muttering a curt command to the anxious-eyed girl who would follow. She hesitated, then obeyed. As her man stalked forward to meet his fate, she remained behind.

Rand, who might have gone into court with his white-man clothing and the presence of Nuné to plead mutely for him, had deliberately discarded both. His only garb was a clout, formed by a strip torn from his shirt. Had he still possessed them, he would have worn his barbaric ear-tufts and claw necklace. As it was, he stalked truculently past, muscular arms swinging as if carrying jungle weapons, bare toes gripping the ground as if it were a jungle trail, jaw hard and black-lashed lids narrowed as if confronting a jungle enemy. Without a word, McKay and Knowlton and Tim swung in after him.

So they entered the presence of the man whose decree was law. Straight up to the table strode Rand, halting two paces from José. Behind him, his escort stopped in skirmish-line, six feet apart, thumbs hooked into gun-belts. At sight of the naked, hostile Huambiza chief the six Sumatara guards moved, their erect spears swaying simultaneously like tall grass swept by a hot wind. But then, as their ruler spoke no word of command, they again became immobile.

José sat unmoved, level-eyed, scanning the defiant captive and the stern men backing him. A glimmer of amusement seemed to dawn and die on his hawk-like visage. Abruptly, harshly, he spoke—

"What have you to say?"

"Nothing!"

The retort was as harsh as his own tone.

"So! That saves time. You have brought an army against me; killed my men; fought to make my women slaves; failed and been captured——"

"Not by you!"

A flush shot over the wan face. But the Spaniard's voice was steady as he went on:

"It does not matter. You are caught; your army is destroyed. You offer no defense. There can be only one end for such a man."

Rand made no answer. His face became wooden, his attitude stolid. José, after waiting a minute or two, continued:

"That is, there could be only one end if that man were in his senses. But when his brain is wrong, and he has friends at hand to take him away, the most merciful thing is to send him away with them. So I am rid of him, and——"

"To —— with your mercy!" flared the captive. "My brain's as good as yours. I stand on my own legs. I have no friends."

"So?" José stroked his mustache. "That is sad—to have no friends. It is more sad to lack brains enough to take advantage of a way out. You are right. You deserve no mercy. Yet— Suppose, Señor Huambiza, that you could escape from my power. What would you do then? Attack me once more?"

"With what?" jeered the other.

"Ah. That is so. With what? You could never return to the Huambizas. Your power among them is gone. Your head would quickly be filled with the hot sand. And the girl Nuné might not fare so well among them then. *Bien.* So you would not attack me again if free. But if I should keep Nuné here——"

"Try it!" Rand broke in ominously.

"Ah. Then you would come back, yes? You would make an army from the monkeys of the trees, perhaps, and attack poor old José. That would be very bad. I must not let it happen. Well, then, if you and Nuné should both go free, what would you do?"

THE clouted man scowled at him. José seemed playing with his victim; yet there seemed to be an object behind it—a probing prompted not by cruel enjoyment, but by some hidden purpose. Some of the hostility died out of the green eyes as their owner pondered the question.

"Go our own way," he answered at length. "Out there somewhere."

He moved his chin, Indian-like, toward the unseen, limitless jungle.

"Ah," reiterated José. "You would not return to your United States?"

"No!"

The king smiled and leaned back more comfortably in his great chair, resting his head against the jaguar-hide.

"So you would be a savage; a lone prowler of the wilds, with only your woman to keep you company. But after a time that life would grow stale. A man with a white man's brain, who had been a commander of fighting men, could not remain forever satisfied with such an existence. Nor could a girl of Spanish blood be content with it. And if she could—death strikes suddenly in the jungle. When you were struck down by snake or *tigre* or Jivero, Nuné would then be alone; helpless, perhaps, with a babe or two. And then what?"

The prisoner's scowl bit deeper. But it was a different sort of scowl; it showed that he caught the dread vision suggested by his inquisitor, and that he knew well how true the prediction might become. Puzzlement, too, was plain in the expression now dominating his face as he studied the Spaniard. He voiced no reply.

"You had not thought of that," José resumed. "Yet you know that I speak truth. You would not let harm come to Nuné. Was it not because of her, and her alone, that you brought my enemies upon me?"

Rand, still studying him, nodded.

"*Bien.* Now listen to a little story.

"Once upon a time there was an outlaw who made himself king. At first he was ambitious for himself alone. But as he worked to build up his new kingdom, his ideas changed. He realized that he himself was only a guide for his people, and his task was to make them as powerful as possible while he lived, and to weaken their enemies. And so he raided and fought, to destroy the foes of his new nation.

"The time came when he might have deserted his little kingdom and gone back to his own land with honor, to live again among white men. But he found that he could not do it. His work had fastened upon him so that he could not turn traitor to it. He had to stay and carry on what he had begun.

"Now this king had had four good friends from the North. They had gone and left him, but often their memories came back to him; and those memories meant much, for he had only Indians about him, and at times he was sick for the companionship of another white man—a white man whose mind was like his own and whose heart was strong and true. He was lonely—so lonely that at times it became a sharp pain gnawing at him. But his friends were far away, and he thought never to see them again.

"Then the four comrades came back to him—but not together. One of them had become an enemy; and because that one was an enemy, the other three were not so friendly at times as before. This hurt the king. But he tried not to show it. For the sake of his people he must crush his enemy, even if he should lose all four of his friends. So he tried to do so. There was a battle, and in it his three friends saved him from his enemy, and captured his enemy also.

"In this fight the king was badly hurt, and his hurt was not altogether that of the body. He had told himself that the friend who had turned against him must be mad. But when he looked into the eyes of that man he saw there no madness, but a bitter hate. Then that old friend struck him down.

So, when the king came to himself again, he hated that man in return with all his strength—as was only natural.

"But in his sickness the king turned things over and over in his mind. He was in a mist, as all the land outside is now; and he could not see clearly anything but his hate for that man, which was very close to him. Then there came through that mist one who opened up the fog and made him see a number of things. One of them was that his old friend had been changed by the jungle into another man. Another was that there had been mist in that man's eyes also when he struck, so that he thought the king an enemy instead of a friend. And as the king thought about this afterward, he began to see other things.

"One of these new things was that after his friends should leave him again he would be more lonely than before. And it came to him that it was a pity that he and the friend who had become his enemy could not be friends again. That man had proved himself to be a fierce and powerful fighter, and a better jungle-man than the king himself. If he wished to remain in the jungle, he would find the king's men much more to his liking than the savages whom he had commanded before, since they were more like himself and almost white.

"And if he would fight for the king as he had fought against him, he would be most valuable to the king—not alone as a commander of warriors, but as a comrade to the king in his loneliness. And if the king should be killed in a fight or die suddenly, then this comrade could carry on his work; for the king knew his new nation was not yet strong enough to stand without a white man's head to direct it. In twenty years, perhaps, when the babes of today were men, the kingdom might be firm enough to grow as it should; but not now.

"So when the king could walk again he walked to see that man. He wished to learn whether that man was truly fearless and hard and strong, or whether he was one of those who fight fiercely in a crowd but crumble when they must stand alone and face bad fortune. He has learned. And now he waits to know whether that man will be again his friend, and stand beside him in the work he means to do."

Utter stillness filled the room. José sat motionless, his hollow eyes dwelling on the amazed face of the ex-Huambiza. Somehow he looked very frail, very weary, as he leaned there against the jaguar-hide. In the past few weeks he had looked on his own death—and, as his words showed, beyond. This was no swashbuckling, red-handed *conquistador* who now sat at the table of the king. He was a man humbled, yet exalted, by his wanderings in the mists.

Nor was the nude man facing him now the truculent, recklessly hostile atavism who had entered the room. His green eyes were wide, his mouth opening and closing soundlessly, his whole attitude that of mingled incredulity and irresolution. Once his brow darkened and his gaze bored into that of José as if he suspected an elaborate hoax. Then his expression cleared, and he looked unseeingly at the motionless White Ones standing like symbols of the new command awaiting him.

"You — mean — that!" he muttered, huskily.

José made no answer. None was needed.

Then Rand stiffened. Firmly, but without animosity, he again met the gaze of the king.

"I stay with no man as a subordinate," he said.

"I want no white subordinate," was the quiet reply. "My subordinates are Indians. I want—a partner."

An instant longer Rand wavered. All at once a broad smile broke over his face. He strode forward, hand outstretched.

"Then, by ——, you've got one!" he vowed.

The two right hands met with a slap. The watchful Sumataras moved again, then paused, uncertain as to whether the two commanders were fighting again or merely trying some strange shaking test of strength. At a curt word from their master, who seemed to see everything, they relaxed.

"Whoopee!" howled Tim, breaking the spell which had held him and his companions. "Yee-ow! Hot dog! Wha'd'ye know! All together, fellers! Blow off the roof in honor o' the kink and his side-kick! Oh you Hozy! Oh you Dave!

His pistol leaped aloft. McKay and Knowlton, swept off their feet by his sudden exuberance, snatched their guns from their holsters. The room roared with smashing concussions as the weapons vomited flame and lead at the inoffensive palm thatch above. Not until the weapons were empty did the ripping salute cease. Then the three hurled themselves at José and Rand, pounding their shoulders and shaking their arms until the king yelled for mercy to his wounded side.

"*Válgame Dios!* Do you wish Señor Dave to become king at once?" he cried. "At least let me eat breakfast before you murder me!"

"José, you're a real man! And a real king!" declared McKay. "I've been doubting you—but *I* haven't chivalry enough to do what you've just done!"

"It is not chivalry, Rodrigo," José hastily disclaimed. "It is sense. When you meet a man too strong for you to overcome, it is good sense to make him your friend. Is it not true?"

Then, with a wave of the hand, he pointed toward the outer door. There the sun now shone bright and hot.

"See, *amigos*, the mists have cleared," he went on. "Let no more of them come between us. And now, partner Dave, go and get shirt and breeches—and your wife—and let us all eat *desayuno* as white people should. I knew my appetite would be better when this thing was finished."

CHAPTER XXVIII

ADIOS

FIVE white men stood together for the last time at the council-table of King José.

Three of them, belted and booted for the dim trails, listened to the talk of the Spanish king himself, who, though erect and steady, rested slightly against the board as if not over-strong. The fifth, barefoot but clad in llanchama garments like those of the ruler, poised easily and watched the others with inscrutable green eyes.

Outside, ready and waiting, a score of athletic warriors lounged beside small basket-packs. Each was a picked man, tireless and trustworthy, armed with carbine and machete. With them waited the perpetually grinning Curac, commander of the detachment.

"I regret that I cannot go with you," José was saying, "but I have not yet the strength. I regret, too, that I cannot send with you my new partner, but I fear that you might steal him from me and carry him home——"

"I'd be back," interjected Rand, his set expression lightening as his glance went to a slender form beyond the table.

"Hah! Yes. If you did not return, *por Dios*, she would not long be husbandless. She likes to be a queen. She might, after all, become the tenth wife of José!"

All looked at Nuné, who stood smiling, uncomprehending the talk but easily reading the admiration in the masculine eyes. Once more she was gowned in the feather-dress of a queen of the rock—now not merely a temporary masquerade, but her rightful costume by virtue of her lord's new power. The proud set of her head, the graceful dignity of her pose, showed that José spoke truth. Nuné reveled in her royalty.

"Faith, ye needn't do nothin' like that," Tim objected. "Any time this li'l lady need a new man, send me a telegram or a radio or somethin', and she won't have to wait long."

"I will bear it in mind, *amigo*," José chuckled. "But, joking aside, comrades, I cannot send Dave with you because I now need him here; and he does not yet know the eastern trails which you will follow. The men under Curac will guide you more speedily and surely.

"Your best way out is to the eastward, as I have said. First by land to a creek, down the creek to a river which has no name, down that river to the Rio Curaray, and so into the big Rio Napo. There Curac and his men will say *adios* to you; for the journey down the Napo to the Amazon will be but play to such men as you three. When you reach the village of San Juan, near the mouth of the Napo, get an Indian guide there. He will show you a cut-off to the southeast, which will bring you out at Iquitos. And there you can await a steamer which will carry you to the sea.

"It is much the simplest and safest way out. To go back over the mountains would be hard, now that the rains grow heavy. To go down the Pastasa would be most dangerous; you will remember what came to Lieutenant Manuel Montez there. The eastward way lies through my own country, and there are no shrinkers of heads on the Napo."

McKay nodded. There was a short silence. Then——

"Well, let's go," said Knowlton.

"Wait a minute," Rand intervened. "Got a message. Wish you'd just watch me sign it and then put your own signatures to it—as witnesses to my own. Then deliver it in New York—in person. You, Rod and Merry. Will you?"

He drew a folded slip from a pocket.

"Sure!" was the hearty assent.

Rand laid the note on the table, with the writing turned under. In the blank space he wrote his name. The designated pair affixed their own signatures at the left. He folded it and handed it to McKay, unread by any of them.

"Take good care of it. Important," he warned, in a low tone. "Address is at the top. Deliver it yourselves, and be ready to take oath that you saw me sign it."

"Righto."

McKay looked curiously at him, but asked no questions. He placed the missive in a small rubber-coated wallet, shut the wallet tightly, stowed it in a secret pocket at his waist-band, and snapped the pocket-fasteners securely.

"Anything else?"

"That's all."

McKay picked up his rifle and glanced out at the waiting warriors. His mates likewise gripped their guns. Silently the three extended their right hands. Each looked deep into the eyes of the comrades he left behind.

"You will come back another time, perhaps, to see how we run our kingdom?" José asked a bit wistfully.

Slowly their heads shook. The Spaniard sighed.

"We're through here," McKay said. "May ramble in some other part of the world, but not here. We've talked it over, and—this is goodby and good luck."

"And may good luck go with you also, *compañeros*," José echoed soberly. "You will not forget us, fighting down here to build a nation. If God favors us, we shall make a monument to ourselves that shall stand long after we are gone: a strong people, where before was nothing but wild beasts."

"We won't forget."

They turned away. But Knowlton wheeled back, fumbling at a shirt-pocket.

"Say," he blurted, "speaking of monuments: Watch out for a shipment from the States in a few months. I've been thinking—well, I made a couple of sketches to pass away the time, and here's the rough one. The other's the same, only better drawn. Going to have some bronze plates made by a good man up home—ship 'em to you at Iquitos—you'll get them through some trader who knows you? Thought so. Set up a good stone block out here and put on the plates when you get them. It's just a fool idea of mine—Tim suggested it without meaning to, a while ago—it's not the same kind of statue he spoke of, though. Sort of a farewell remembrance that means something. Like it?"

José, studying the rough sketch put in his hand, looked up with eyes suddenly misty.

"*Teniente*, it means something indeed—more than I can tell you. I shall be most proud to have it. And so long as I live I shall fight to keep it true."

"Good! Well—*adios!*"

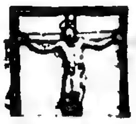
The blond man tramped doorward. The others followed, José limping slightly. Curac grunted. The lounging men sprang up, donned packs, and, with their scar-faced commander at their head, lined out toward the guard-hut where the downward path began. Outside, in the sun, the three adventurers paused for the last time, looking back at the three from whose lives they were passing forever.

"Luck, Dave!" said McKay.

"I have luck," was the serene answer.

As he spoke, the man they left behind passed an arm around the slender waist of Numé and drew her to him.

"*Adios!*"



SOMETHING golden flashed in the fingers of Numé. She raised it to her lips and held it there. Above the gold cross which had carried her safe through the most appalling savagery, the deep eyes of the priestess of Piatzo dwelt on the departing men who had, after all, brought her Rana to her. In their dark depths shone a farewell and a benediction, and in the gleam of the golden token at her lips was a symbolic blessing, which remained in the memories of the northerners long after they had plunged into the jungle shadows awaiting them.

Three hands rose to the brims of broad hats. Three faces turned away. Three backs receded, marching in steady unison, toward the trail. They wheeled at the guard-hut, sank below the brink, and were gone.

"Come," said José.

Across the mesa he limped, Rand and Nuné sauntering easily beside him. On a breezy point at the farther end they halted, looking down. A depression in the green marked the line of a path, and at one point the path itself was visible for a short way. After a time the king pointed to it.

Into that blank stretch of path had come moving figures: light bronze men creeping along with steady rhythm, tiny glints of sun flickering from carbines swaying in their hands. The line lengthened. Then came three brownish hats, three khaki forms. The file grew shorter, shorter, vanishing into the green blanket beyond. The three dwarfs in turn crept onward and faded out. Once more the path was empty.

Rand drew a long, slow breath. His eyes lifted, roving along the line of heights hemming in his world. Then they encountered the steady regard of José.

"Are you sorry?" quietly asked the Spaniard.

"No."

The green-eyed man's deep chest rose again; but this time he was inhaling the damp breath of the jungle as a man draws in the fragrance of his homeland. His arms stretched wide and came slowly down. A glimmer of amusement showed under his black lashes.

"That message I gave Rod," he said, "was an order to my bank to give every dollar of mine to Tim Ryan!"

A glad light flamed on the thin face of the king.

"*Por Dios!* You are a partner indeed! You burn your bridges, as I burned mine when I refused the bait of Peru. Ah, comrade, we shall pull together! We have a hard and bloody road before us, with only death at the end. Yet, while we live, we have this—" his arm swept out at the boundless, lawless jungle—"and freedom, and the devotion of handsome women and strong men. It is enough. And when we are gone——

"See what Señor Knowlton is to send us. It shall stand upon this rock. And though this rock is lost in the wilderness and that monument may never be seen by another white man, I would not exchange it for the title of Conqueror of the World!"

Into his partner's palm he pressed the little sketch depicting the bronze plates, which, by devious ways, were to come at last to the top of that jungle-buried fortress and, affixed to a block of stone left there by an unknown race, look down on a new king and a new nation. Rand studied it. Then he lifted thoughtful eyes to the man who had brought together the scattered seeds from which that nation now was growing; who, instead of destroying him and his winsome Nuné, had given them a new life and a new home, in which they could be most content and most powerful for good.

"It's true," he said. "In more ways than one. But your name isn't on it."

"No. Yet, if my name—and yours—do not live in the hearts of those who come after us, they are best forgotten. Come."

And they turned away from the out-trail and walked silently back to the houses dedicated to the destinies of the White Ones.

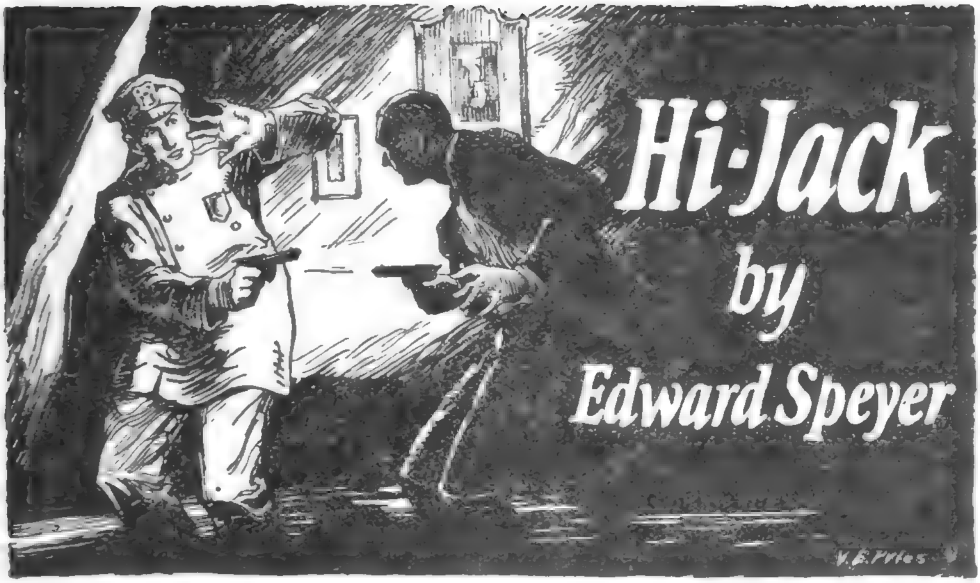
Of the two plates, one was oval and one was square. From the oval looked a striking likeness of José Martinez; eagle-faced, hawk-eyed, resolute, gazing far-sighted into the misty distances of an unknown land and an unborn future. Below, within the square, stood the words spoken by José on the day when he first led white men into his forbidden fastness; words before which the greatest conquerers in all history, who had slain their millions and plunged empires into agony and desolation, might well hang their heads in shame.

I FOUND A RUIN

AND

I MADE A HOME

THE END



Hi-Jack

by Edward Speyer

MRS. ELIZABETH DeLAVAL had a nice little apartment, plenty of clothes and money enough, to say nothing of a generous, if not entirely enjoyable "daddy"; but she was not happy. Her life had some drawbacks which might not all have been apparent to her associates, and which were not wholly clear to Elizabeth, brought up in a tradition that love excuses everything. Nevertheless, she was not happy.

Elizabeth's real name was Grace Martin, and she never had been married to anybody in all her nineteen years. Probably you would have considered her a very wicked woman. Time was when you would quite scornfully have called her a "chicken," unconscious of the fact that the term would have been as descriptive of her mentality as of her outward show.

Elizabeth's "daddy" was "Hi-Jack" Holmes, and if you knew Hi-Jack that would explain a great deal. He mustered twenty-two years and a high school education, and as many of the twenty-two years as could possibly be were abnormally wicked. He enjoyed an income of a thousand dollars a week, he spent it gaudily, and Elizabeth was one of the gauds. He also kept her to have some one handy to kick.

To begin with, Elizabeth loved him. He was a grand guy, he spent his money free, and he looked so much like Rodolph Valentino. Jack—he was not Hi-Jack then—saw this as a bond between them, because he, too, felt the Valentino likeness and modeled his garb on the theory of the Divine Rodolph. Incidentally, if the said Mr. Valentino had ever caught himself out of a picture dressed as was Jack, he would have had himself arrested.

When Jack cast his devastating eye on Elizabeth—who was then still Grace—dealing out pie at the cafeteria counter he was already making good in the bootlegging business and had gained a name for cold daring. He was not without daring out of business hours, too, for he leaned across the counter and said to the young lady:

"Kid, I'm strong for you. How about a little party tonight?"

So it came about that presently, weary-eyed in the morning, the lady of his affections lost her job in the cafeteria; and who so comforting as Jack? Then came her blond prettiness installed in the Rebosa Apartments, and because you really ought to have a married name as well as a wedding ring, Grace became Mrs. Elizabeth DeLaval. She had always like Elizabeth and DeLaval was so distinguished.

All the other girls in the Rebosa rather envied Elizabeth, for Jack was a grand guy, gave her swell stuff and took her out a lot. They admitted that she stuck close to him, but then Jack was a bad guy to monkey

"Hi-Jack," copyright, 1924, by Edward Speyer.

with, and anyhow why did she want any other men?

By the time the girls had decided this, Jack had adopted a new business and become Hi-Jack. The business came to him suddenly when, sitting beside his driver, he was rolling along with a load of whisky. In a lonely spot just outside of Wyandotte two men stepped out and said—

"Put 'em up!"

Jack put 'em up, but with the same motion shot both men. To big, dumb Tim he simply said—

"Drive ahead."

It wasn't till an hour later that Jack said suddenly—

"Why in —— should we *buy* our stuff!"

So he became a hi-jacker, which meant that instead of going to the river-front and purchasing his beer, gin, and whisky F.O.B. dock, he and Tim waited until some one else had bought, then stuck 'em up and took the stuff. Since there was no cost, the profit from the sales was greatly enhanced.

But it was a dangerous business, and Jack soon found that he had not only to protect himself against gunmen of the bootlegging interests, but had to shield the saloon-keepers who bought from him against reprisals by the bootleggers and raids by other hi-jackers. So he recruited a gang of eager young sheiks, promised them lots of money, plenty of fun and no real work. It was the owl's nightshirt!

Receipts mounted, for naturally the saloons had to pay not only for the liquor but for protection, and there were others who had to be dragooned into buying or paying protection or both. Then, too, there was the loot of the tills of patrons and protégés of other gangs. Some of the recalcitrant had to be treated pretty rough; in fact, the boys had to bump off Felix Dombrowski before some of the others would line up.

Expenses were high, but there was still a thousand a week in it for Jack. He was liberal with the boys, but still it couldn't be said that they liked him. They were afraid of him—all except big Tim, who didn't know enough to be afraid of anything—and it is pretty hard to like a man you are afraid of. The boys had carried Paul Garcia out feet first because he had pinched a case of rye, and nobody ever did know why Jack killed this fellow Blondy, unless it was because Blondy got sore when Jack beat his dog.

It is the record of most successful business men, even those in Jack's business, that they are good to their mothers, but it must be admitted that old Mrs. Holmes was a very trying sort. Hard work had bent and seamed her. She was religiously inclined, and while she knew very little of Jack's way of life that little did not encourage her belief in the welfare of his soul. Jack merely laughed when she argued and pleaded, but when she began to pray over him he knocked her flat with the kitchen chair.

That was a mistake. He should have used his fist, as the chief of detectives pointed out.

"We got a good warrant for him now," the chief said. "We never had anything on the—" well, he said just what Jack was—"but a chair's a deadly weapon. You try and get him, Bill, and we'll see if anybody else can pick him up. He'll get a long stretch."

Of course Jack heard immediately that there was a warrant for him, and he was enraged. His first thought was to hurry the old lady to her heavenly reward, but she was safe in the Women's Detention Home, enjoying life for the first time in many years, in the character of a material witness, and when Jack approached her dwelling he saw two unmistakable detectives carelessly but receptively disposed near by.

WHILE Jack was fading, we must return to Bill, to whom the Chief spoke. Bill was Bill James, a large and not altogether stupid detective. Bill, of course, had a partner who was known as Jim Hunter, because his first name was Delos or Delancey or something silly. Jim was even larger than Bill, but far younger, a comely and smiling blond, just promoted from the uniformed force and darned proud of it. He didn't have much sense, Bill admitted, but he had guts and a nice way with women.

Of course Bill and Jim went to the Rebosa Apartments to have a talk with Elizabeth. She received them tastefully clad, her beauty only slightly marred by the faint, lingering remains of a black eye.

"Honest to ——," she said, "I don't know where he is. I ain't seen him for nearly two weeks an' I'm pretty near broke now." Because she was attracted to him, she looked at Jim severely. "You fellows is in a pretty business chasing a poor kid like Jack."

"He broke his mother's false teeth," said Jim. "They cost her $14.50. He hit her with a chair. You don't think that's right."

"No, that ain't right," she agreed. "He gives me a —— of enough of a time, but he didn't ought to do that to his mother. But he ain't here and he ain't been here."

They lingered for a time, Bill laying crafty and useless traps, Jim evidently greatly impressed by her charm. Her interest in Jim was likewise unquestionable and so impressed itself on Bill that after they left he said to his partner:

"Listen! I didn't expect that he'd be here or that she'd tell nothing, but say! She likes you. You go up there tonight and talk to her and maybe she'll spill something. I'll stay outside and watch."

"I sort of like her too," Jim admitted.

"She ain't a bad kid, but don't fall too hard," his partner admonished. "Let her do the falling."

Well pleased, Jim went back to the little apartment that evening and sat on the edge of the rocker, half a social caller, half a limb of the law. Elizabeth decorated an arm-chair, very low in her mind, anything but the queen of a successful king of the underworld.

"I wisht I was back in the cafeteria," she said. "I wisht I was back on the farm. You know I was on pa's farm till I was ten, but he sold it. Us kids used to have a good time there, but I didn't know it. I don't know what I ever come to live with Jack for. I was a good girl then. I wisht I was now."

"Don't cry, little girl," said Jim kindly. "You c'n go back to the farm. We'll get Jack an' send him up for a good, long stretch. You know, I'm off the farm myself. You oughtn't to be here alone, either. Ain't you got no friends?"

"Not a one that ain't scared of Jack."

"Poor little girl," he said patting her hand vigorously. "I ain't scared of Jack."

She was such a wobegone little thing. Then—just how it happened neither of them knew, but she was in his lap, weeping on his shoulder, and he was petting her, murmuring—

"There, there, there——"

"When we get Jack I'll take care of you," he assured her. "Kiss me again, dearest. We'll get married and have a flat an' you c'n do housework in a blue apron."

"Oh, lovely, lovely," she murmured.

It took Bill's signal on the bell below to break them up and then Jim, before he started for the door, lifted her up and kissed her. This, by the way, was indiscreet, for they stood between the light and the window and the kiss was silhouetted on the shade.

For once Jim was slow in duty's call.

"Take this from me," he said, kissing her at the door, and slipped a ring from his finger.

It was a cheap thing, set with what Jim knew as a "Brazil Diamond."

"And this from me," said the girl.

She fumbled a moment and produced a locket, such as a girl might buy at a five and ten cent store.

"It's mine," she said. "I bought it myself when I was in the cafeteria."

Jim kissed her again and slipped the heavy, tawdry brass object into the pocket of his vest.

"She don't know nothing," he told Bill.

"I didn't think she did," said Bill. "She's kinda dumb."

"She ain't exactly dumb," Jim objected. "He don't tell her nothing. He abuses her a lot, too."

WHILE these worthies and many others were seeking him, Hi-Jack was hidden up-stairs over a saloon, well guarded, receiving messages and duly certified visitors, conducting his business. To him came Tim, his erstwhile driver, the most faithful of his men, whom Jack had set to watch the home of his beloved.

"Jack," said Tim, more or less out of breath, "this big towheaded bull Hunter's been up making love to your girl."

Jack laughed easily.

"You —— fool! Of course the dicks have been up there. But she don't know nothing. Making love!"

"Well, what did he kiss her in front of the window for?" asked Tim.

He was rewarded by being knocked off his feet and looked up to see Jack standing over him with a gun.

"Nix, nix," he said. "You told me to watch. That's what I seen."

Tim had two virtues, fearlessness and loyalty, and Jack kicked him and let him rise. Anyhow he was convinced.

"So-o-o!" said Jack, boiling with rage. "Kissing a cop—like a —— cook. I'll cook her—an' him!"

The back stairs were dark, the alley was dark, and swiftly Jack slipped out on the main thoroughfare. He was dressed less smartly than his wont. His dapper sideburns were gone. He would have been hard to recognize as he made his way to a taxi-stand to be dropped not too close to the Rebosa Apartments.

He did not attempt the doors. There was a basement window he knew, and had the police been on guard in the little, ornate lobby all they would have seen of him would have been his back as the tiny, self-operating elevator passed the first floor.

Slowly he went to the fifth floor, where Elizabeth was sitting in the arm-chair wondering vaguely about Jim and Jack and all things under heaven and earth. She did not even hear his key turn in the lock.

She did not hear him till he stood before her, a slim, dark, menacing figure.

"So you've been kissing a bull," he said.

Not a nervous woman, she did not start but came slowly out of her daze, looking up from the arm-chair.

"Kissing a bull?" she repeated.

"Yes, this big Hunter," he asserted. "Tim saw you at the window. Going to turn me up, huh? I'll fix you."

Elizabeth set her small wits to work.

"That fellow!" she said. "Why, I had to talk to him—on account of you."

Jack was shrewd and hard, far beyond her mentality; he understood her and she did not convince him.

"You little sap!" he spat. "He petted you and you fell for him. But you're *my* girl. I'll fix you."

He leaned toward her, his eyes hard and cruel. The girl tried to shrink into the back of the big chair.

"No! No!" she cried as she cowered. "I swear——"

Still he leaned nearer, then suddenly stopped.

"You're just a fool," he said. "It's him I want."

Jack could think quickly, formulate plans quickly. His work demanded rapid wits. He grasped her roughly by the wrist and dragged her over to the telephone. Holding her firmly, he took down the receiver and called, of all unexpected places, police headquarters.

"Now," he said to the girl, "when I get him on the line you tell him to come here. I'll get him then."

"He won't be there," she said.

"He will be. He and that fat-head Bill James will be back there getting the reports on me."

Then he spoke into the phone, in a high strained voice, asking for Hunter.

"He's there," he said. "Now you take the phone when I tell you."

"I won't do it!" she said.

"You will," he insisted.

The twisting pressure on her arm was excruciating. Perspiration stood on her forehead, but, almost dead of pain, she held to her muttered negative. Suddenly Jack smiled, hearing Hunter's hello on the line.

"Tell him to come," he whispered, putting every ounce of his strength into a savage twist.

The pain brought forth a wild shriek.

"Jim! Jim! Help! Help!"

Then Elizabeth was on the floor, released from the torture; Jack, the receiver replaced, standing over her and smiling.

"I guess that'll bring him," he said, "an' you won't be where you can help him."

Very deftly he tied her with torn sheets, gagged her and flung her on the bed in the inner room. He unlatched the outer door, opened a window in the bedroom to give access to the narrow coping, carefully examined his automatic, placed a chair where it would directly face the door, and put out all the lights. Then he sat in the chair and waited.

He was waiting to kill and perhaps to be killed, moved by something that may have been his honor. He had been touched in his most vital spot. His girl had fallen for a bull. He would be laughed at unless he avenged. He might be hated, feared, hunted, but he must not be laughed at by his equals and his inferiors.

It mattered nothing that, while he counted on Jim rushing away alone to help the girl, the officer might, after a moment's touch of sanity, be bringing with him a wagon load of police. Hunter would be in first. He would get Jim. The rest was chance, the open window, the high coping around the Rebosa.

The waiting was nothing to Hi-Jack, who

had often waited, and fate was favoring him. Big Jim, alone, was speeding to the Rebosa and the little, helpless girl. Behind him, but much behind him, was another car into which Bill had bundled a dozen detectives and uniformed men.

Leaving his motor running at the curb, Jim dashed into the vestbiule of the apartment. He rang for the janitor and hardly had the door opened when he was in the elevator, traveling slowly—all too slowly—to the fifth floor.

One thing the slow trip did for him—it cooled his brain. He slipped out his revolver, examined the cartridges. Though he knew that the stopping of the elevator and the opening of the doors would betray him, he walked softly to the apartment door and, with his weapon pointed, jerked it open.

Jack saw the big bulk silhouetted against the hall light and fired. The officer felt a terrific impact against his side, but his great size held him steady as he shot against the flash. The two explosions were so close together that they sounded almost as one, and then Jim, feeling rather sick, was fumbling for the light switch. Even as he did so the halls were filling and the men from Bill James' car, spurred by the sound of the shots, were pounding up the stairs.

Dazed and a little uncertain, Jim looked around. Bill was shouldering his way through the crowd in the hall as Jim discovered the man in the chair. Jack still clutched the automatic, but he looked rather odd. There was no top to his head.

Jim found his voice.

"Girl! Girl!" he called.

Getting no answer, he pushed on into the inner room. Bill James found them there, a kissing welter of man, girl and torn linen in strips.

"Didn't he kill you, Jimmy? Didn't he kill you, Jimmy?" she repeated over and over.

"Yes," put in Bill. "Didn't he hit you?"

Hunter swung slowly away from the girl.

"He *did* hit me somewhere at that," he said, putting his hand to his side. He fumbled queerly at a hole in his coat.

Then he smiled and reached into the upper left hand pocket of his vest.

Still smiling, he drew out a queer piece of metal. It was bent, dented and splashed with lead, all that a bullet had left of a heavy tawdry brass locket such as a girl might buy at any five and ten cent store.

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

Creeds

I GET fearfully fed up with all this old stuff about being "gifted."

There are thousands of men whose noses are upon the grindstone, whose bodies are numb with weariness so that their minds are become almost the minds of a horse or a mule from sheer slavery, who *are* gifted. But society's way has them where they are.

I've spent years and years too tired ever to be able to think.

When the poor man, whose soul holds the fires of freedom and of love that the Almighty gave to each of us, thinks, and after years of slavery, thinks madly, society calls him a bolshevist or some such familiar term.

I am none of those things. But, thank God, I know whence they spring.

Well, there is always the anchorage in the last of all the havens. Some day our ships shall lie there, resting at their anchors, with sun upon their decks, and singing on their happy hatches.

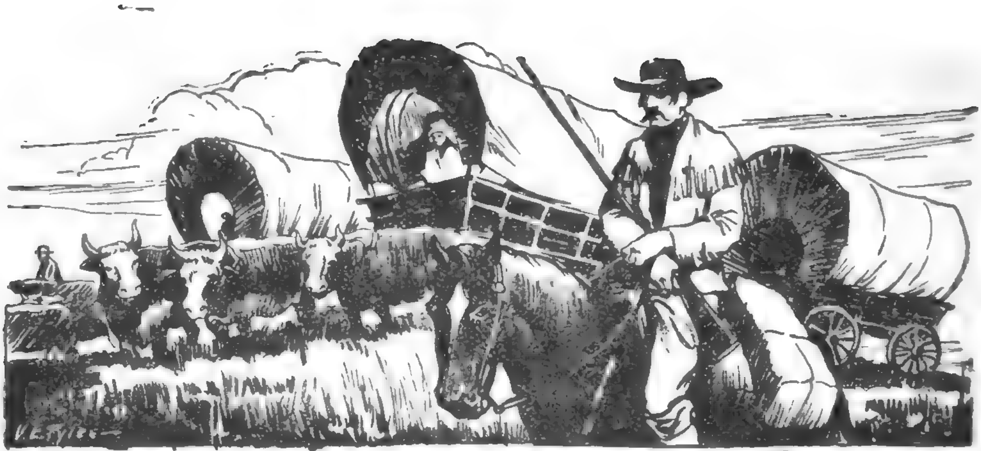
I am more and more convinced of the presence of God amongst us. But, being human, am very, very weak. The strongest of men is after all but a child when he comes face to face with the greatest question.

The strongest of us cannot get along alone; and be worthy of our manhood.

We must lean the one upon the other. There are so many men who are self-opinionated; and seem to think that they hold some divine prerogative which gives them grace to lay the law down for each and all.

I do not know how many creeds there are in this America—some two hundred odd I believe. Amongst them all how much of real man-to-man honest friendship is there?

I'd like to be a man amongst the mightiest—but that can only be by my being a child amongst the little children. If I am wrong, tell me, for I would truly learn.



The Stage Goes by

An Article ◆ by Michael J. Phillips

Author of "The Frontier Robin Hood," "A Pathfinder Without Fame," etc.

THERE was Indian sign in plenty. The shadow of the tomahawk darkened the skies of the people of the crawling caravan. They found the prairie-grass trampled about the trail where, undoubtedly, many ponies swept across it only a few hours before.

Some of the men, adept in reading signs, stooped to the tracks. They announced after long scrutiny that an Indian war-party passed that way. At a ford some miles further on, the banks were trampled and muddied by the impatient surging of many thirsty horses.

One day, morning and night, a lone scout, armed and wearing a war-bonnet, appeared on the low line of hills that flanked the line of advance. He sat his horse motionless as marble on a jutting point which permitted him to see the trail for miles. There seemed something almost contemptuous in his scrutiny and in the way he turned with a single flourish of his lance and galloped away while the whites plodded past.

The time was 1852. The discovery of gold in California and the millions of acres of free, fertile land in Oregon called to the adventurous. Their crawling, canvas-topped wagons dotted the vast length of the Overland Trail.

This was one of the smaller caravans. There were only a dozen wagons in it. Unrest grew as evidences of hostile Indians multiplied. For they knew the fate they dared. It was shown them plainly.

They came on evidences of an attack on a preceding train—charred embers, the tires of two wagons, the bloated carcasses of horses, rags of canvas, a broken rifle, the sooty iron parts of a plow. The men nodded with grim appreciation when they saw, dotted in an irregular circle close about, dead Indian ponies.

That caravan, larger than their own, won the fight and beat off the attack. So much could be told. They paid for the victory, for the horribly mutilated bodies of three white men huddled on the grass. Why the bodies were left unburied was a mystery. Perhaps, during a temporary withdrawal of the Indians, the caravan sought hastily a spot more easily defended.

Anyway, here were those who perished. An obligation existed for those who followed—the obligation of giving a decent burial. It was a long way to California, the land of gold, and they were anxious to reach it. But at a word from their leader, John Oliver Waugh, they took shovels from the wagons and dug a shallow grave.

When the bodies were underground and

"The Stage Goes By," copyright, 1924, by Michael J. Phillips

the single mound covered with stones to protect it from wild animals, the pioneers knelt. Waugh prayed, simply and eloquently. Then the train moved on again, the heads of the weary horses bobbing up and down, up and down, as they strained toward the setting sun.

The crisis loomed when many horsemen appeared in the gray light of next morning. They came from the hills ahead and rode down diagonally on the train at a hard gallop. Indians—Indians carrying rifles and wearing war-bonnets.

"We'll form the circle, John?" asked Adolphus Carver anxiously.

He referred to the closely-locked coil of wagons, its crevices chinked with anything that would stop a bullet, from behind which the pioneers fought their attackers on the Overland Trail.

"No," replied the leader. "There will be no fight. Forward!"

He beckoned his eight-year-old son, John Jacob Waugh, riding horseback beside the lead pair. The boy wheeled and came back. Father and son changed places. Waugh mounted the excited animal. Swarthy young John Jacob climbed to the high seat of the prairie schooner, sifted the reins of the four-horse team expertly into place between his chubby fingers and clucked commandingly.

Most of the women huddled behind the canvas of their wagons, as if depending for shelter on the flimsy cloth. But clear-eyed, comely Mrs. Waugh did not move from the wagon-seat where she perched. Her elder son, Lorenzo, ten years old, peered eagerly ahead from between the shoulders of his mother and proud and important young John Jacob.

John Oliver Waugh rode out at an angle from the creeping train to meet the charging Indians. He seemed a strange and commanding figure. He dressed differently from most of the pioneers. He wore a black felt hat, flat-topped and flat-brimmed, and a long-skirted, professional black coat which flapped about his legs. His trousers were also of decent black. They were tucked into serviceable cowhide boots. Much of his grave, strong face was covered by a black beard.

His approach threw the Indians into uncertainty. As they came within a few hundred yards the headlong charge slackened to a trot, then to a walk. Half a rifle shot away they stopped. Except one warrior who was, from his elaborate war-paint and trappings, a chief. His pony, checked to sedateness, went forward to meet the leisurely pace of the white man.

Waugh raised his hands, palm upward, and spread his arms wide, to signify that he was unarmed. Instantly, with a disdainful gesture, the chief flung down his rifle. The two men faced each other, the horses almost nose to nose. Waugh spoke in the tribal dialect. At times at a loss for a word, he supplied it deftly from the sign-language, known to all Indians.

"Why do my red brothers come in war?" he asked. "I mean them no harm. I am the red man's friend. I do not stop here to take his lands. I go on, to the great salt waters beyond which the sun sinks to its sleep. It is a journey of many moons.

"I only pass through with my brothers. The blades of grass will spring up more thickly after our wheels have crushed them down. We do not need many buffalo. The herd will flow on like a mighty river when we have stilled our little hunger. Why should we fight and murder each other? The Great Spirit will strike down those who kill needlessly. The Happy Hunting Grounds are forever closed to them."

Here was a novel doctrine. Most Indians firmly believed that death in battle, any battle, meant honor, influence, and many buffaloes in the Happy Hunting Grounds. The chief sat stoically on his horse, but his eyes showed perplexity. As he reflected on a reply, another voice spoke. The Indian is as curious as a coyote, and the whole war-party ambled slowly forward during Waugh's remarks, so they might hear everything.

"It is the Black Eagle," said the latest speaker. "He comes among the red men to tell them of the Great White Spirit and to make good medicine. He gives the papooses toys, and shows the squaws where the strong herbs grow. He is our friend."

John Oliver Waugh was an ordained minister who worked for years among the Indians before California called him. When he assembled in Missouri the little party of neighbors which formed his caravan, he did so with more confidence than many of his colleagues. He believed his long acquaintance and friendship with the tribes would prove better defense than many guns.

The Indian's words justified the confidence. The war-party grunted recognition and approval. Some knew him; others knew of him. For, though Waugh was a long way west of Missouri and so outside his field, the Indian is a great gossip. They talked around many camp-fires of Black Eagle.

Recognition transformed the charge into a visit of friendship and ceremony. The wagon-train came up and halted. Reds and whites mingled and exchanged gifts. They ate together. When they separated, the war-party returning to the hills and the pioneers following the Trail along the flat lands, one of the warriors rode with the whites to the next tribe as their guide and sponsor.

The safe conduct so given endured as the handful of wagons dragged its way across the desert, over perilous mountain passes, and at last through the lush greenery of a California Winter. Aside from Indian fighting so happily spared them, the usual mishaps plagued them *en route*.

Once they missed the Trail and wandered into broken country that delayed them for weeks. A waterhole on which they depended betrayed them, and a child died of thirst and fever. They buried the little girl beside the Trail while the weeping women bowed in resignation and John Oliver Waugh spoke comforting words, and raised his face in calm courage to the heavens. They abandoned a wagon hopelessly broken down, and divided its occupants among the others.

Young John Jacob Waugh seemed to have a way with horses, and drove a good part of the journey. The animals responded to his fierce, shrill treble. He noticed that most of the other drivers chewed tobacco, so he borrowed some and spat secretly over the wheel. He became dreadfully sick and the spanking which his outraged father gave him that day did not help his miserable condition.

Five months from the Missouri rendezvous the gaunt and bronzed and tattered train rolled into the capital of El Dorado—the pulsing, riotous town of Sacramento.

THE Waugh family plunged into the diggings. When John Oliver Waugh did not immediately wash a fortune from the stream bed, disappointed he moved on. He clung to the horses and the canvas-topped wagon, so that his wife and children might go with him. Gold camps with picturesque names knew them, gold camps filled with hard, rough, picturesque men.

At times John Oliver Waugh forsook the diggings and took to ranching or to preaching. He stayed for various periods in Ukiah and Mendocino. The boys got some schooling in these towns.

Young John Jacob's teacher at Ukiah was a slim, gray-eyed young fellow, rather the dandy in dress, whose name was Herbert Matterson. Though in his early twenties, he wore a luxuriant blond beard, which added dignity and maturity to his appearance. John liked and admired him immensely.

The schoolhouse was a one-room log shack. Two families of Pattiways lived in the vicinity; there were six Pattiway boys in school. That is, they came in mid-Winter, when the school moved smoothly in easy channels. The dandified Matterson was a good teacher.

The Pattiway clan were rough and boisterous. Their leader, young Buck Pattiway, was chunky, sulky and bullying. He claimed credit for running out several teachers, aided and abetted by his brothers and cousins.

Matterson judged human nature quickly and well. He started on the Pattiways before they stirred themselves to start on him. His tongue, sharp as a scalpel, flayed the newcomers with scarifying comment before they could organize for revolt. Without raising a hand he conquered and cowed them.

That was the first day; but the second "Buck" Pattiway, Senior, prize bully of the Ukiah district, followed his offspring to school. Their sniveling complaints as to the teacher's abusive tongue aroused his rage and curiosity. He wished to see, before he annihilated, this fop who dared defy the Pattiways.

His bulk filled the doorway; his growl echoed through the little schoolroom. He slouched on the sill, a heavy pistol dangling against his hip. He glared at Matterson.

As seemed to be his custom, the teacher met trouble half-way. He rose, smiling, snatched the solid chair from behind his desk, swung it over his head and knocked Pattiway flat on his back in the pathway outside the door.

Matterson scorned to hurry. Really,

there was no need for haste, since Pattiway's thick skull was all but cracked. He was unconscious, and blood oozed from a scalp cut. The teacher said good-by to his flock, advised them to study hard, and to obey the next teacher. Even while he held the rebellious but frightened Pattiways in their places with the lightnings of his gray eyes. Then he went quietly away.

John Jacob Waugh and the other children profited by the taming of Buck Pattiway, even though it cost them a well-liked teacher. The Pattiways rough-housed no more in the log school. John Jacob increased by something his stock of learning.

John Waugh, the father, settled on a quarter-section of government land at Petaluma, the hundred-and-sixty-acre tract costing him a dollar and a quarter an acre, or two hundred dollars. There he lived, and there he died.

Middle-class California of the late fifties and early sixties stayed only briefly in school. The gold-diggings, the cattle-ranches, the throbbing, flaring streets of San Francisco, the wild smelter-towns, the mysterious reaches of the desert—all beckoned to boys of spirit. So John Jacob definitely said good-by to the three R's at fourteen.

He tried many things, roaming about central California the while, but always came back to a job with horses. He was a wizard with the ribbons at eighteen. Wells, Fargo & Company extended their stage-lines monthly and found good drivers scarce. John hired out to the express company for one hundred and twenty-five dollars, gold, a month. Board and lodging were free, usually, courtesies gladly extended by the inns at the end of the day's run.

A driver in the gold country earned much beside his salary. He did things for every one: Carrying messages from town to town; delivering small packages and looking after women and children entrusted to him. The miners, though rough in their language and ready on the trigger, were generous. Many an ounce of dust and sizable nuggets were clapped into his hand for the favors willingly performed. Then the company paid bonuses for bringing through safely the strong boxes packed with fortunes in yellow metal.

Young John's first stage-driving job was out of Petaluma for Cloverdale and other near-by towns. He speedily established a reputation for being prompt, careful and trustworthy. When half-broken teams were to be used, they were given to Waugh; he could handle them. When the stage-line extended its length to a new town, he drew the run. His ability and pleasant manners helped to popularize Wells-Fargo and to create a spirit discouraging to the efforts of road agents.

Gradually he worked south as settlers took up the land and increased population made more stages profitable. He asked for transfer to Santa Barbara county; and there he stayed because it suited him.

The link in the Wells-Fargo system to which he devoted more than two decades of his life, extended from Plato, since vanished from the maps but then a settlement on the Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo county line, south to Santa Barbara city. The distance is perhaps ninety miles.

Not far, as miles are measured by fast trains, and by automobiles over pavement. But in those days it was a long way, through desolate, uninhabited stretches where the road was a pair of ruts, or over the mountains where it was a narrow, slippery shelf up the steep sides.

The company stations maintained for changes of horses were fifteen to eighteen miles apart. There was an attendant—sometimes two—to care for the horses, an adobe house and a stable. Every second stopping-place had a blacksmith shop, for the rocks battered horseshoes and stages.

Winter driving was the worst. The rains came any time after September and frequently lasted for days. Despite floods, landslides and washouts, the stages stopped only to change horses—unless progress for the time proved impossible. The passengers on through journeys foraged at the stage stations. They used the hostler's fireplace to cook food. If he were married, they paid his wife for preparing a hasty meal.

John Waugh's division led through the Santa Maria River at a point where there were shallows and a station-house. And nothing else; though now a flourishing town of five thousand people stands at the crossing. From there he rolled through Foxen Cañon, following Frémont's route in 1846, and came out at what is now the town of Los Olivos in Santa Ynes Valley.

In those days Los Olivos, forerunner of the village of several hundred people of today, had two houses and no name. Old man Crabbe and his two sons occupied one house. They made a living by hunting and trapping. The other building was an inn which sheltered the stage-station. A slender young Swiss, Felix Mattei, ran it. This station was new. Wells, Fargo & Company established it because they felt that Ballard's Crossing, some distance below, was too far away. The distance from the Santa Maria proved a severe tax on a single relay of horses.

Another station nestled at the far end of Santa Ynes Valley, at the foot of the mountain wall, and another stood at the top of San Marcos Pass. From the crest down the long slope, it was a single relay through Goleta Valley to Santa Barbara.

A road existed through Gaviota, the Pass of the Gulls, where the native Californians waited in vain for Frémont, so they might roll boulders down upon him. A rough route wormed itself through Refugio Pass, coming out at the ocean below Gaviota. But San Marcos, now a scenic route commercially unimportant, was then the main way.

In the Winter months, during the period of heavy rains, two outriders usually accompanied each stage over the flat country. For there were no bridges and the mountain-fed streams rose with unbelievable rapidity. The outriders tested the depth of the water before the coach ventured into it.

ONE of John Waugh's Winter experiences, though not typical, was by no means unusual. The mail-stage, lighter and faster than the express stages, which also carried passengers, but no mail, usually arrived at Mattei's Tavern from the north at nine in the morning. But midnight struck before it splashed up to the veranda in a downpour, the horses' feet squashing, the jellied earth sucking at the wheels.

The high coach swung on long springs. It was painted a vivid color, now somewhat dimmed by the elements, but still bravely overlaid with scrolls and gilt flowers. The body curved upward at either end like a boat. There were a glass-topped door and two windows on either side.

A boot at the back held baggage, and another in front contained the strong box. There were two broad, leather-upholstered seats, facing inside. These held six people. There were more places on top, above the driver, fended by metal rods. The capacity, inside and out, was not more than ten persons, since the mails took up so much space inside. The regular express-type stage carried sixteen.

Lights gleamed in the windows and the open doorway of Mattei's as the coach stopped. Hostlers rushed out to seize the steaming horses, unhook them, and lead them away. The coach door opened and the passengers came forth, four men and two women. The few unfortunates forced to ride outside descended gingerly, feeling for grudging footholds and for the hub of the forward wheel. The driver swung off in his tarpaulins, glad that his long day's work at last was done.

Here came fresh horses, stamping and tossing as they were hooked up. The passengers streamed out, cramming last mouthfuls. John Waugh came, too, and climbed to the box, gathering up the reins as he did so. Lanterns in front, one on either side of the foot-platform and directly over the wheelers, dimly modified the murk.

The lines were wet and cold. In fair weather Waugh frequently drove his six horses with one hand. But not tonight. He separated the strips of leather into their proper position: Those to the leaders between the first and second fingers of either hand; those to the swing, or center team, between the second and third fingers and those to the wheelers between the third and little fingers.

The outriders, swathed in rain-proof garments, plopped up to take position ahead of the leaders.

"Let go!" commanded Waugh.

The coach door slammed and the last grumbling outside passenger settled into place.

The hostlers released the leaders' heads and stepped back. The horses sprang forward at a gallop. The lights of Mattei's dropped suddenly behind. They tore over the valley at outlaw speed, the coach splashing and swaying. They seemed to be boring into a wall of darkness so absolute as to be physically resistant. The lanterns showed only the dark backs of the wheel-horses, already wet, and rippling shiningly with the play of eager muscle.

Driving developed into a matter of feeling the reins. Waugh left the following of the road to the horses themselves. Yet he sat in unrelaxed watchfulness. He must be ready instantly to check them if one of the animals stumbled or the leaders lost their heads.

The rain rolled down over them. In places the road was awash. The grueling work slowed the enthusiasm of the horses. They dropped from a gallop to a trot. After an hour or more one of the outriders shouted and Waugh stopped the stage. Above the storm he heard the roar of a stream.

Though he could see nothing, he knew his location. They were mid-way of the valley. For months at a time this creek was dry. After the first rains, it ran a mere rivulet. But in such storms as this it swelled to dangerous proportions.

The outrider who shouted rode back.

"No use, John," he reported. "We can't make it. We'd be swimmin' in less'n a rod. Guess we'll have to stay here till daylight."

The stage-driver leaned with an oath from the box.

"Ride in!" he commanded.

"But I tell you——"

"Ride in, blast it! Next trip I'll call for a man who ain't chicken-hearted!"

There spoke the true Wells-Fargo man. Mail-stages went forward while going forward proved humanly possible. The company boasted that no driver ever turned back. If the elements stopped him he surrendered nothing of the distance gained. He stayed until he could fight through.

But a clear line divided courage and enterprise on the one hand from foolhardiness on the other. Drivers refused attempts which seemed likely to result in the loss of the stage and the death of passengers. They stopped by a swollen stream unless the horses of the outriders could walk across If these lost their footing and swam, it indicated that the encumbered stage horses would be swept away with their burden if they tried it.

Stung by Waugh's contemptuous words the outriders spurred forward and plunged into the roaring stream. In an instant a cry of alarm sounded. The torrent, running like a mill-race, rushed them down-stream. The horses pawed and splashed in an effort to regain their footing.

The riders were experienced and they knew the contour of the land. They reined their struggling mounts to the right, heading diagonally with the current for the bank just quitted. They knew the stream must broaden and become shallow on a flat some yards below. They won; the flailing hoofs struck bottom and the horses surged, panting and snorting, ashore.

John Waugh smiled a little at the rider's shout and dismounted from the box. It told him advance for the time was impossible. He refused to feel concerned over the outriders. Their jobs sent them ahead. If the floods beat them down and drowned them—why, too bad, but something no man could help. That chance they discounted when they went to work for Wells, Fargo & Company. The mails must go through!

The rain slackened. By some magic the driver found dead limbs on the oaks near by and built a fire. Some of the passengers snored in the coach. Others came to crouch around the cheering glow, yarning with Waugh and the outriders, or nodding in fitful slumber.

Daybreak at last. The rain stopped; the stream shrank, slowly but steadily. Its roar dwindled to a babbling rush. The outriders put into it, John watching them closely. The horses walked, except for a few feet in the center.

"We'll chance it!" he snapped. "Hang on!"

He spoke to his six horses. They leaped like thoroughbreds facing the barrier, tore down the steep bank at a speed that made the coach tremble on the edge of an upset, and struck the yellow flood with a mighty *whoo-ssh!*

The spray flew high over their backs into the faces of Waugh and the outside passengers. When the leaders found the earth gone from beneath their feet, the driver spoke again. The second and third pairs shot forward strongly, bunting their mates to the shallower water on the far side. Thus only one team swam at a time; the others pulled.

The coach swung sickeningly down-stream almost at right angles when it reached deep water. John Waugh, confident and alert, awaited the instant. He drew heavily on the left-hand lines. The six horses turned up-stream, thus avoiding cross-traction and an overturn. They came safely to shore.

Not long thereafter the stage reached

the station at the base of the mountain. The hostlers put in new horses. The yawning, blear-eyed passengers refreshed themselves with hot coffee, bread and bacon. After brief delay John shook up his team, and they breasted willingly the steep track.

It was a toll-road over San Marcos. Wells-Fargo won permission from the government to cross Federal lands and maintain a highway in the mountains for their own use. So gangs worked constantly on the Pass, rebuilding after the wrath of storms and the wear and tear of iron-bound vehicles. Private wagons that crossed paid a dollar to the express company for the privilege.

Lightly but persistently, the rain started again. The horses slipped, sometimes, as they toiled upwards. The passengers looked into chasms whose bottoms were hidden in mist. A pebble displaced went over the side to drop whisperingly through the bushes and, after the lapse of seconds, to clatter faintly on the rocks far below.

Death leaned to touch them on the shoulder. A slab of rock, loosened by seeping moisture, sloughed outward under the feet of the horses. Alarmed, they leaped to safety. The front wheel dropped into the hole. The stage overturned, falling toward the gorge. Yet the hand of death was withdrawn.

An outpost of rock, thickly covered with bushes, stood just here. A shelf jutted out a few feet below. The rock supported the top of the stage at the center, and prevented the vehicle from rolling over. The passengers spilled off the top. The vegetation broke their fall. They alighted on the shelf, more or less bruised.

John Waugh clung to the reins as he pitched toward the brink. And, also, he spoke to the horses. He feared a stampede that would send them hurtling up the trail, dragging the overturned coach at their heels, spilling fragments and passengers into the void.

But he controlled them absolutely. They trembled and snorted; they looked behind them with frightened eyes and distended nostrils. Yet they stood in their tracks.

Screams, groans and oaths came from within the coach. John Waugh rose quickly from the very lip of the declivity. He wrapped the reins about a convenient shrub, went to the upper, or inside, of the road, and helped the imprisoned passengers out through the left-hand doors and windows, now pointing toward the sky. Those below scrambled up from the shelf where Providence deposited them.

"Come on, now," urged the driver, not harshly, but with a compelling briskness. "A doctor'll fix you up when you get to Santa Barbara. I guess there's no broken bones. Let's right this stage."

He organized them; they repaired the road by blocking the misplaced slab in its bed with smaller stones. Together they heaved from the under side until the stage was upright. John drove the empty vehicle ahead so that it cleared the break. Then they took their seats and the horses resumed their laboring progress.

The top of the Pass; the stage station at Kinevan's ranch. Waugh reported the defective spot to the repair gang. A last change of horses, and the stage went on. It slipped and slid down the seaward face of the mountain, squealing under the brakes. Once in the level Goleta Valley the horses in spite of the mud broke into a gallop.

The coach tore into Santa Barbara, bouncing over the rocks and muddy ruts of State Street. It drew up at the terminal, the Morris House, with a flourish. The hour was three in the afternoon, so it was just a day late.

"Have any trouble, John?" queried the hotel proprietor.

"Oh, nothing to speak of," returned John, yawning.

AN ERUPTION of road-agents broke out over central California stage-lines the next Summer. The bandits moved southward when the Vigilantes and Wells-Fargo resented too vigorously their activities in the gold country. Reports came in of hold-ups from San Luis Obispo south.

John Waugh speculated as to when he would look into the muzzle of a bandit's rifle. He worried not at all; there were too many other things, more pressing. Besides, he could do nothing about it. Either he would be held up, or he wouldn't be.

The stage bowled along one blue-and-gold morning on the Santa Maria—Mattei's division. The air was keen but delightful and most of the passengers rode outside to enjoy it. The horses frisked and frolicked. They approached the heavily-wooded heights of upper Santa Barbara

County. Waugh's thoughts were on anything but road-agents when there came the sharp command—

"Put 'em up!"

He dropped his reins promptly, after a word to the horses, and elevated his hands. The passengers inside and out did likewise. Waugh and the other drivers on mountain divisions at this time had strict instructions to battle no road-agents. Good sound sense dictated the order.

For the robber, covering the stage, always held the advantage. A false move by the driver would be followed instantly by his death or serious wounding. In either event, the team might bolt. That meant passengers killed or hurt. Wells, Fargo & Company would become defendants in damage suits more costly than the value of the average cargo.

John Waugh sat without movement, awaiting the next command. The bandit chose admirably the place for the stick-up. The road mounted to turn sharply about a flat rock. This rock was as high as the top of the stage. The man stood on it. When the horses stopped he could reach the coach with his hand.

John looked him over sharply and saw a small man, neatly dressed. A black mask covered the upper part of the cleanly-shaven face. The bandit held a rifle carelessly at the ready, his right elbow against his hip. To aim was unnecessary. From that distance he could kill without raising the piece.

"Throw out the safe," he ordered, in a soft, rather musical voice. Then to the passengers beneath—

"Stay inside down there or this gun may go off—sudden!"

John stooped to the boot under his feet. His hands closed on the iron strong-box. But the robber spoke again—

"Hold on; sit up so I can see you."

Obediently the driver sat up. The stranger looked at him closely, and a sparkle came into the eyes shining through the mask. The dapper little man chuckled.

"You're John Waugh, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Waugh, wondering.

The other chuckled again.

"John Waugh of Ukiah. I heard you were driving down this way. Those black whiskers fooled me, even though they are like your father's. It's a long time since I saw you."

"It's longer than that," retorted John, drily. "I never saw you before."

"No?" was the bantering question. "We won't argue it, John. But, anyway, I'm not sticking up any stage you drive."

He shifted the rifle across his body and hugged it against him, so that his right arm was free.

"Shake, for old times' sake," he said, thrusting his hand across the gap. "Good morning, John Waugh, and good-by."

Waugh clasped the proffered hand and shook it, then gathered up the reins.

"Drive on, John. And a pleasant journey to you all!" was the highwayman's valedictory.

The mystified passengers laughed and cheered.

"Who is he, Mr. Waugh?" came the volleyed question, as the horses dashed on.

But the stagedriver could not tell them; he didn't know. All the way southward he puzzled over the cool, chuckling little road-agent. The name of the town of his boyhood served only to make his puzzlement greater. He groped backward through the years, trying to pin down a memory that mocked and eluded him.

Some days later, when the up-bound stage rolled into Mattei's and Waugh mounted to take it northward, he found the coveted seat by the driver occupied by a man who remained atop during the halt. Neither spoke until they were bowling through Foxen Cañon. Then the man murmured guardedly—

"Don't you know me, John?"

Waugh gave him a look and ejaculated—

"You're the man who wouldn't hold me up the other morning!"

"Well, don't tell the rest of them about it," he smiled, glancing over his shoulder. "Yes; I'm that fellow, all right. But think back. Can't you remember me?"

John shook his head.

"I'm Herbert Matterson, your teacher at Ukiah," went on the passenger.

The name explained the puzzling sense of familiarity.

Matterson talked freely. After laying out the Ukiah bully with his chair, he went to the diggings. He was unsuccessful. He tried teaching, clerking and various other occupations looked on as refined. But a fierce spirit of independence and a hot temper prevented his holding any position long. At last he drifted into stage robbery.

He said seriously to his old-time pupil—

"I'm doing well at it, too!"

He dropped off the stage near the familiar tall rock. That night a lone highwayman robbed the down stage of twenty-eight thousand dollars in bullion. They found the spot where his horse stood tethered for hours. But they did not find him.

For reasons which he finds hard to explain, John Waugh did not report Matterson. Perhaps it was loyalty to a man he admired from boyhood days. It may have been due to Matterson's chivalrous refusal to rob the stage of his former pupil. Perhaps he knew that his report would make very little difference anyway, and that Matterson would be captured without his help. At any rate he kept his silence.

John Waugh experienced another hold-up that Summer. A lone highwayman—not Matterson, but a bigger man who disdained a mask—stopped him on San Marcos grade and commanded—

"Throw down that box!"

Waugh permitted himself a smile.

"Come and get it," he urged, politely, eyes following the direction of uplifted hands.

"I'll give you five seconds," announced the bandit, ominously, raising his rifle.

"It's chained on," replied John.

The fellow climbed the wheel and saw that John spoke truth. A heavy iron chain passed through both the iron rings that served as handles, and thence about a newly-affixed iron brace so strongly bolted that it would be necessary to sledge the front of the stage to pieces to free it. The chain fastened with a massive lock.

"Come on with the key!" barked the robber.

"Haven't any key," replied John, pleasantly. "They lock it on in San Francisco. The Wells-Fargo agent at Santa Barbara carries the only other key."

The robber gave over his hope of plunder. He could not get the box without tools and without a companion to hold the driver and passengers at bay. So, with bitter curses for so stingy an express company he disappeared into the bushes.

Very shortly thereafter the sheriff captured Matterson when he robbed a stage in Monterey county. His trial ended in conviction and a sentence to San Quentin for three years. He proved a model prisoner, and in two years and a fraction gained freedom—freedom to pursue his old calling if he desired.

Wells, Fargo & Company, John Waugh tells, sent an ambassador to the dapper ex-schoolteacher. This man met him soon after he left the prison gates. He declared frankly the company feared Matterson and wanted to buy immunity. So Matterson accepted a pension and a perpetual pass and retired from the road—professionally. Though he did spend a good deal of time upon it, riding from San Francisco to San Diego beside the drivers.

With the chaining on of strong-boxes, the lone road-agent vanished. The bandits traveled in pairs thereafter. They carried, as well as guns, big files and a sledge. One stood guard over the passengers while the other filed and smashed the links binding the safe.

Matterson rode on a stage held up by a pair of the gentry after he signed the treaty with Wells-Fargo. He goaded them to rage by his caustic comment on their bungling methods. When they threatened to kill him he told them, grinning, who he was. His reputation shone among road-agents, and the pair finished their job in humility and embarrassment.

John Waugh married, and set up his home in the valley of the Santa Ynes. His wife bore him two sons. He drove in later years only on the link from Los Olivos to Santa Barbara, and so could spend every other night at home. He earned good wages. Prosperity and content enfolded him.

But anxiety came to stage-drivers, John Waugh among the rest. People talked much of railroads—of lines projected, of lines advancing. These threatened stage-coach jobs. Most of the men knew nothing but stage-driving—felt they could do nothing else. The future held doubt and blackness.

Certainty followed the long dread. The Southern Pacific at last inched itself into Santa Barbara from the south. Wells-Fargo gave over the attempt to compete by coach in the lower territory. They lost their mail contracts. They transferred their express-messengers and valuables to the steam cars. The railroad, after a delay of some years, crept north of Santa Barbara. The number of stages dwindled. Coaches dropped out here and there. Value-packages for the chained-on strong-boxes, grew fewer and fewer.

As John Waugh mounted his box at Los Olivos one morning, the driver he relieved handed him a sealed letter. It notified him tersely that at an imminent date the stage to Santa Barbara would be discontinued.

SO PASSED the stages. Wealthy Santa Barbara men bought two of the vehicles which John Waugh guided for so many years, and they appear in parades now on festival days. Something of the zest of life went out of the driver when they, and the horses he loved and which loved him, were sold at auction.

He adapted himself, though; bought a ranch and settled down. As the years sped his black beard turned to gray, then to white. He left the ranch and moved into Los Olivos. His wife died two years ago. The old driver and his sons live on in their weather-beaten home.

John is nearly eighty now; his eye is dim and his speech is slow. Sometimes he mounts a little hill north of the village to chat with M. T. Cheney, who drove opposite him in the later years on the Santa Barbara stage.

John goes to Mattei's Tavern, too. Felix Mattei is grown stout and very gray. He has a fine, new place surrounded by guest bungalows. Motor-parties roll up for luncheon, demanding metropolitan service, and wanting to know if they can't reach Santa Barbara in an hour and a half.

Things have changed. One of Mattei's sons is an artist in New York. There are no longer any Indians in Santa Ynes Valley, though when John began driving there were two villages of them. As the motorists in city clothes ask for ice-water and a long-distance telephone and the latest radio news, old John sometimes catches the eye of the suave and smiling host and shakes his head a little. It was not like this in the stage-coach days. Things have changed— a lot.

Still, there are compensations. The Coast Route through Gaviota, the paved King's Highway from San Diego north, ignores Los Olivos. But, while portions of it underwent repairs last Summer, they closed the road. Traffic detoured through the village.

The great automobile stages, almost as long as Pullmans, came thundering up to Mattei's every two hours. John's pulses stirred; ghost of youth reawakened. When the driver of one of the gray monsters, a uniformed, goggled, legginged young man, swaggered into Mattei's for the luncheon stop, John laid a hand on his arm and asked anxiously—

"How are the roads?"

"Fine, old-timer," laughed the other, and, passing on, spoke to Mattei, "Who's the old guy that's worrying about the road?"

"That," said Mattei, "is John Waugh, who drove stage-coach in California for more than thirty years."

The other's manner changed. He turned abruptly and went back.

"Just found out who you are, Uncle John," he smiled, holding out his hand. "I guess us fellows have a snap now, considering what you went through. I'd admire to have you take a little ride with me. I'll see you get back before sundown."

"I'll be glad to go, boy," replied John, old eyes brightening.

So the vanishing generation and the new rode side by side, covering in minutes the distance which formerly took hours. John talked little; but he knew what went on about him. When the great car, its tires crackling on the pavement, swept dexterously around a mountain pinnacle and up a steep grade, actually gathering speed as it mounted, he said tersely—

"Good drivin'!"

Not so long thereafter, though the run would have been a hard day's journey for horses, the driver signaled another big car approaching at forty miles an hour. The stages came to a skilful stop, side by side.

"Say, Bill," began the driver of the up-bound stage, "here's a pal o' mine goin' back to Los Olivos. Take him on, will you? Dead-head."

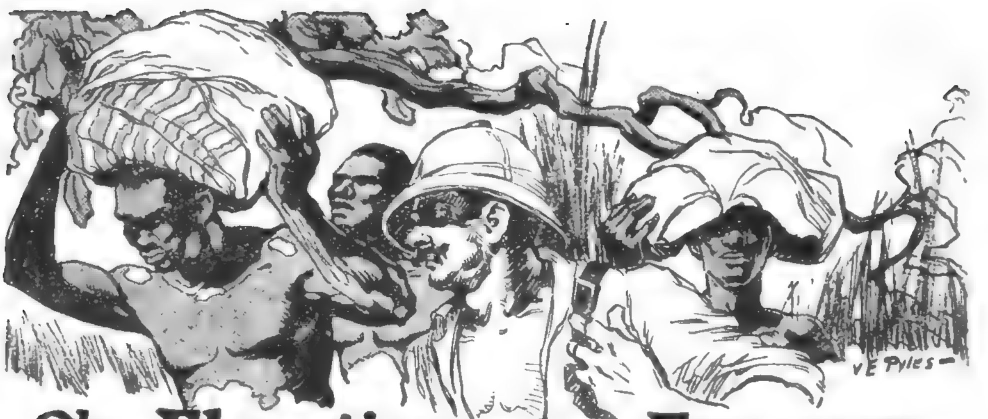
"I don't know about the dead-head part," began Bill, doubtfully. "You know the company——"

"To —— with the company!" retorted the up-bound driver. "Uncle John belongs to our lodge. He drove stage over them mountains before we were born. That was a he-man's job, I'll tell the world! He rides any time, any place, so long as I'm behind the wheel o' one of these hearses. Goin' to take him on?"

"Sure!" replied Bill, instantly.

He turned to the well-dressed man beside him:

"Say, mister, I guess you'll have to get inside. I got a friend who's goin' to sit here by me!"



The Elevation of an Emperor

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by William Ashley Anderson

Author of "The Trial of a Timid Man," "The Defense of Yung Chow."

THE hard brown African plain of Serengeti, flat as a shingle, stretched away apparently without limits, the horizon melting in iridescent heat waves and fusing with the white-hot sky. There was very little to break the monotony of this patch of earth—a flat-topped mimosa under which a rhino drowsed, a few ravens hopping languidly about with beaks agape and wings trailing with a rustling sound in the stubble, a moving patch of shimmering stripes that were a grazing herd of zebra, and a solitary outlaw kongoni lifting its head occasionally to gaze suspiciously at a small group of human beings advancing erratically across the plain.

Two of these were white men, arguing with increasing exasperation. The smaller was Lieutenant Lewis, one of General Smuts' scouts, acting well in advance of the wing of the army that was then encircling Kilimanjaro. He was a scrawny youth with sun-blistered nose, hazel eyes and a scrubby growth of reddish-blond beard. His sleeveless khaki tunic was torn and tattered; his round service *tarboosh* with flap down the neck gave him at a distance a long-haired, disheveled appearance that was emphasized by his scratched knees and badly worn ammunition boots.

Lewis had come through terrible country on a long and dangerous reconnaissance that brought him out at the upper end of Lake Eyassi. Here he had concluded that the safest and quickest way to return a report was to make his way westward through the Meatu country until he reached Muanza on Victoria Nyanza, which was in the hands of the British.

Unfortunately for him, before turning westward he had ventured to pry into the primeval fastness of Oldeani; and there he encountered Purgstall.

This man Purgstall was a man of note. He had inherited from his parents, brief survivors of the ill-omened colony which, years before, had sought to found a second Arcadia on the inauspicious banks of the Tana, an unshakable conviction that all European Governments were intolerably oppressive. This conviction was strengthened by the opinions of his neighbors, the Boer settlers who had trekked northward into a new country rather than take the oath of allegiance to Great Britain at the conclusion of the South African War.

He was a big man with grayish face and lusterless eyes, and an air of overbearing determination. His looks were true to character. There was a certain animal wildness about him that a man expects to find in a low grade of savage, but seldom in a white man. He looked as if, in necessity, he could tear his way through any physical obstacle; and if hungry, would eat anything.

He was a creature who refused to be trapped by civilization. This, in fact, explained his appearance on the Serengeti plain in the protesting company of Lieutenant Lewis, followed by three of Purgstall's outlaw Masai, naked, and armed with long-bladed spears, their faces framed in the tufted masks which indicate that an *el-moran* has "plunged his blade into twelve hearts."

Lewis was being forcibly ejected for trespassing on Purgstall's private domain. This in itself would not have been so bad, but Purgstall insisted upon escorting him to the German lines to insure his capture. The Nandi scout who had accompanied him had already been despatched by the thrust of a spear in the forests of Oldeani. Purgstall did not intend to have his stronghold disturbed by invaders!

"If you are a German you have no right to interfere with me. I'm in uniform, and you're a non-combatant," protested Lewis.

"I'm not a German," said Purgstall vacantly.

"Well, if you're a Dutchman that makes it worse."

"I'm not a Dutchman."

"Well, I don't care what you are! You're making a serious mistake."

"I'm an African," said Purgstall, turning his head and looking at Lewis. "I don't want any sneaks making trouble in my district."

"*Your* district!" exclaimed Lewis with shrill indignation.

Purgstall halted and began to curse without heat. When he had relieved his feelings somewhat he said sullenly:

"Look here! You don't realize that I'm doing you a favor. You're making a lot of trouble for me. *Muungu!* Do you think I like this march? Why did you come here anyway? You are nothing but a dirty spy!"

"You—you—lie—you!" stuttered Lewis wildly.

"If I didn't feel good-natured I could kill you, too."

"Go on," said Lewis furiously. "You're just as likely to be shot yourself, if any British troops get their hands on you. This sort of thing's worse than guerilla warfare. You're acting like an out-and-out criminal!"

"I'm boss here!"

Purgstall looked at Lewis speculatively. The boy was exhausted, famished, and on the verge of tears with useless rage and mortification; but Purgstall was not inclined to take chances. For years he had been a free agent, more or less ignored by an overburdened Government which was not inclined to interfere with him so long as he confined himself to his hunting-grounds.

He possessed the conviction—maintained with better logic by pioneers in other colonies—that he had an acutal right of eminent domain over whatever land he could cut out and hold for himself. His stronghold had become a rallying-place for the more flagrant poachers and outlaws who worked along the borders of German East Africa and British East Africa, and the prospect of his liberty being infringed upon by invaders enraged him in a dull, smoldering fashion.

"You're boss," said Lewis defiantly, "until some English A.P.O. is appointed for this district—and then—he'll—he'll —— well hang you!"

Purgstall felt his rage stirring within him. He looked down at the boy, with eyebrows drawing together, and his dried lips pulled away from his small, hard teeth. All at once he took his open hand and struck Lewis violently on the face, knocking him flat on the ground and sending his *tarboosh* flying a dozen feet away. The three *el-moran* promptly shifted their weight to one foot and, resting on their spears, watched the proceedings with bored expressions.

"Shut up!" roared Purgstall.

Blood began to trickle from Lewis' nose; his sandy hair clung dankly to his forehead; he sat up with a dazed look and began to curse. Purgstall drew his revolver and fired at him.

Lewis sank back on the ground with a surprized, hurt look on his face. Raising his hand, he said quietly in a scared voice—

"Don't be a ruddy fool."

Purgstall's face was swollen. Without changing his attitude he fired again. Lewis did not move, but he emitted a sort of stifled scream. Purgstall began to walk away, muttering; then he changed his mind and, returning, fired three more deliberate shots. As each bullet struck, Lewis gave a faint scream. Then he collapsed into a shapeless lump.

As Lewis rolled his eyes toward Purgstall the three Masai *el-moran* stooped hastily on bended knees with hands to their mouths to avoid meeting the dying man's vengeful spirit. They looked calmly, inquisitively at Purgstall; Purgstall returned the gaze indifferently. After a moment's hesitation he shot out the empty shells and reloaded the revolver.

"Come," he said to the *el-moran*, turning away; "we'll go back. That saves us a long march."

This bit of action took place in only a few minutes.

Four human beings turned back on their tracks. The rhino still drowsed undisturbed under the mimosa; the ravens after a few startled croaks continued to stretch their wings and gawp for a breath of cool air; the wavering stripes of the zebras had dissolved in the heat-waves radiating from the surface of the plain; and the kongoni, after staring rigidly with extended neck, resumed his grazing. The three *el-moran* followed Purgstall without a word of comment, but there was a slight difference in their appearance.

The first wore a string of tarnished brass buttons around his neck and a *tarboosh* that hung precariously on the back of his greasy head. The second had decorated himself with green tabs and an identification disk. The third had appropriated Lewis' whistle and wore his sleeveless tunic flapping about his clay-smeared shoulders.

BY THE time Purgstall reached camp he had almost dismissed Lewis from his mind. According to the outlaw's ideas Lewis had met a natural death—the death of all creatures of the wild, sudden and violent.

As for Purgstall's conscience, he considered himself perfectly justified in driving out and destroying an enemy who threatened to drive him out and bring about the loss of his lands. It was the law of the continent. A man had a right to take what he could, whether it was a woman or an empire, and hold it—if he could. As to the natives, he maintained:

"They are children. We lead them!"

His parents, expressing the same convictions, had at least been consistent, after their failure to impose a sort of serfdom upon the Somalis in the sacred name of socialism. They had led the natives—rapidly—until they were well within the British East African border.

Purgstall's leadership had been of a somewhat bolder character; and it is certain that the natives did respect him as a bold and firm chieftain. The Masai particularly admired him; but the Masai are blustering braggarts, a degenerating tribe of freebooters, cattle-stealers and cutthroats. Outlawed Masai therefore welcomed his leadership and displayed frank enjoyment in participating in his occasional excursions in search of women and other necessities that the primeval forest did not supply.

One day several months after the murder of Lewis, Purgstall learned that Olangi, the *el-moran* who had decorated himself with the green tabs and identification disk, had been captured by a patrol of South Africans, and in attempting to escape had been killed.

"Killed!" said Purgstall complacently. "Well, that's all right, because a dead Masai is the same as any other Masai. They can look there! So long as they don't interfere with me!"

The great tribe inhabiting the Masai Steppe, south of Kilimanjaro, had no intention, however, of letting the blame for an English officer's death rest on them. There had been a tacit understanding between Germans and British at the outbreak of war that the Masai should not be employed by either side; the risk that this fierce and bloodthirsty people might get out of hand was considered too great.

In time the Masai learned to be grateful that they were apparently ignored in the general invitations to combat that were enforced upon every other tribe in the two colonies. Moreover, after they had witnessed a year or so's campaigning across and in the vicinity of their reservations they were strongly insistent upon remaining neutral. It was not their style of warfare! They were accustomed to striking—burning—pillaging—flying—and striking again!

The dogged persistence of the whites and their native allies—and the interminable lines of troops that poured across the country—made a profound impression. Parenthetically it may be well to note that the losses in this colonial branch of the war may be roughly estimated at something like three hundred thousand, an overwhelming proportion of which were natives.

When directly accused by the Masai commissioner in no uncertain terms of responsibility for the death of Lieutenant Lewis, the tribesmen therefore raised a howl of protest, insisting that the murderer was an outcast. This was too thin an excuse for the commissioner to accept. The Masai promptly stalked Ngirrati, the *el-moran* who had made a necklace of Lewis' brass buttons, and after extracting a confession from him, brought him in a dying condition before the commissioner, who thus learned the truth of the matter and presented it to the proper authorities.

Purgstall heard the news from his third *el-moran*, who had got all the details with much embellishment in the *manyeta* of a minor chieftain whom he had dared to visit. This *el-moran* escaped from the plains into the highlands with the tribe at his heels.

"You brought those dogs here to besiege us?" demanded Purgstall breathlessly.

"I brought the news," said the *el-moran* proudly, swaying from loss of blood.

Two of Purgstall's companions had been playing cards on the *stoep* of a well-built *banda* of wattle and banana fronds that was their headquarters. They whistled for the others who were within the camp, and proceeded immediately to hold a conference. They already knew about the crime, Purgstall had thought nothing of describing it; but when it came to sharing responsibility for it, that was a different matter entirely.

"The thing for you to do," said a German deserter judicially, "is to leave this country—fast."

"No!"

"Of course, it is a matter that is entirely up to you," said a Portuguese hunter, who was likewise eager to avoid all scenes of hostilities, "but what is the use of remaining? They will come here and get you."

"I will fight them. This place is mine."

"It is yours," said the Portuguese suavely. "Certainly. It is yours so long as you can hold it!"

"I can hold it!"

"Against the British Army? You are more capable than General von Lettow Vorbeck!"

"They have taken Tabora," said the German with a fatalistic stare at Purgstall; "you will not be able to get through to Portuguese East Africa. North! East! South! Purgstall, I would recommend that you go west to Lake Kivu. Perhaps from there you could go north and reach Egypt. Egypt will soon be a German ally! That is a good prospect for you."

Purgstall began to curse ponderously, bitterly; but his companions gave him no consolation.

"What the ruddy —— the use?" said a colonial renegade, expressing himself emphatically in his own tongue. "I'm beggared if you're going to make me the mucking goat! My vote's you do a bunk—*sasa hevi!*"

Purgstall held the palm of his hand over his mouth with the thumb resting against the side of his nose, a Masai gesture which he had unconsciously adopted.

That evening another report came in that a British patrol was advancing from the south toward Oldeani. Purgstall's companions became excited.

"Look 'ere," said the colonial, "if you don't ruddy well clear out, we will. See? I don't mind a bit of a scrap now and then with these niggers. But you're pulling the British Army down on us—and that's too thick!"

The Portuguese, suddenly scared by another angle of the situation, exploded with blasphemy and obscenity.

"Come orn! Come orn!" said the colonial.

"Well," said the Portuguese, "I don't want to be killed by the Masai! No! I stay here! Right here! If the English come, I am a friend—an ally! Purgstall! What do I care? Have I not got my own neck to look out for?"

"That does it!" said the colonial. "I don't want a five-foot blade run up my backbone, either!"

"You are cowards!" roared Purgstall, looking gray and dusty as a surly rhino, with his head lowered, and a glint of red in his small, dull eyes.

"Pooh! Pooh!" said the colonial, packing his pipe. "You'd better pull stakes!"

"*Muungu!*" said Purgstall, reaching ponderously for his revolver. "I'll blow your face in!"

"Tut! Tut!" said the colonial, looking at him through the film of smoke.

The German got very red and proceeded to blabber incoherently, growing redder and redder as his voice increased in volume; the Portuguese became suddenly calm and, softly retreating a few paces, keeping his eyes fixed on Purgstall's swollen face, picked up his rifle and swung the muzzle toward the angry outlaw. The natives in the clearing moved swiftly to the edge of the bush, where they stood watching with interest. But nothing happened.

Hyena-like, having lunged and snapped his jaws ineffectually, Purgstall realized that the game was shy, and was ready to give up and bolt. Grunting, he raised the palm of his hand to his mouth and considered, while his companions relaxed. After a while he said with sudden animation, jerking his head up:

"All right! What's the difference? Africa is mine! Give me a bag of salt and a rifle, and, by ——, I can go to Cairo without missing a meal. *Karibu!* Come here, you boys! Make ready for a quick *safari.*"

Purgstall was not a fool. He fitted into his environment perfectly. Like an old, heavy-bellied lion he was capable of covering great distances without apparent fatigue, and at the end attacking with suddenness and ferocity. Also like an old lion, he realized in time that he himself was being hunted and, turning with soundless snarls, trotted off to new hunting-grounds.

His mistake was a common one. From his almost native knowledge of one section of the continent he jumped too readily to the conclusion that all Africa was an open book to him.

As his *safari* of four Wanyamwezi and the wounded Masai *el-moran* took to the bush, Purgstall turned to his former companions, who watched him noncommittally from the *stoep*, and shouted:

"Look, you men! I will show you that I know Africa better than any white man alive. This time I'll not make a refuge for a pack of cowards. I'll make myself king of a kingdom!"

HE TOOK a direct route through the Meatu country toward Muanza at the southern end of Victoria Nyanza, and two weeks later walked into that scattered town just as the setting sun was sending bars of light across the purpling waters. Only one incident of note had marked the swift journey.

As the trail led past the spot where Lieutenant Lewis had been murdered, Purgstall had recognized the mimosa standing out on the plain, and halted somewhat resentfully to locate the remains. There was really nothing to locate. The scavengers of the veld had left nothing of Lewis but a memory. Still Purgstall searched with morbid persistence until, seeing something in the grass that looked like a piece of a limb with mummified flesh upon it, he stooped to prod it with his *safari* spear, and lo! it was a thick mud-colored adder, which struck at him.

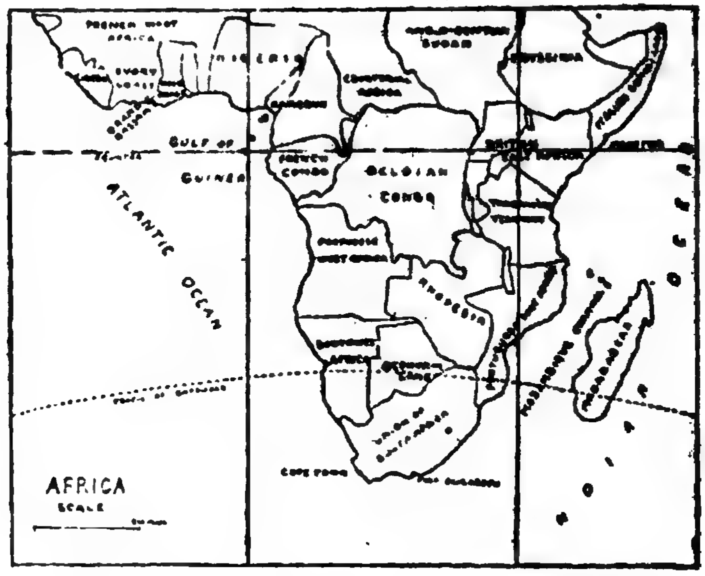
He jerked himself spasmodically to one side, thrashing down at the reptile with his spear. The blow killed it; but the thin shaft of the spear was broken.

"Phew!"

Purgstall whistled softly, raising his big palm to his lips. Then he remembered the superstition of the Masai; and, beckoning to the *el-moran*, who was standing wearily on one leg, resting the foot of the other against his knee, he pointed to the ground where the dead snake lay.

"See, warrior," said he, blustering; "I have destroyed the evil spirit of that dead *mzungu!*"

The *el-moran* advanced gingerly through the grass until his eyes rested on the dead adder. With a little grunt of satisfaction he squatted beside it and picked up the broken spear to prod it.



The adder's mate, lying in the dust of the stubble, flung itself at him like a released spring, fastening its ugly head, big as a boy's fist, upon his forearm, on the inner side, just below the elbow. The *el-moran* rose to his feet, leaping backward, stumbling, shaking frenziedly at the loathsome little monster that seemed to cling to him.

At last it flopped in the dust, and Purgstall ground his heel upon its head. But the *el-moran* made no move except to stand there swaying slightly with the wounded arm dangling and his other hand pressing against his throbbing throat where the glands were already beginning to ache from the poison.

"That *mzungu* has done this!" said the *el-moran.*

Purgstall pulled out his knife and seized the *el-moran's* arm to slash the wound; but the Masai jerked away. Walking drunkenly back to the trail, he slumped suddenly beside his shield and long-bladed spear; and, hunching his scrap of calfskin covering up over his shoulders as if he were cold, he bowed his head between his knees.

The Wanyanwezi porters, squatting by their loads, sucking tobacco-smoke through bark fillers, murmured among themselves and looked at him curiously without making a move to assist. Purgstall walked heavily after him and stood looking down at him, frowning, and far more perturbed than he had been when he shot Lewis. It was a simple fact that he was saturated in Africa; and that meant that though he possessed great brutal courage his mind reeked with terrifying superstitions.

He knew that the *el-moran* was beyond aid. But he understood what most white men would not have realized; and that was that the *el-moran* might have been saved, since the bite of the adder was not necessarily deadly, except for a far more potent force that had struck him. The *el-moran* no longer dared to live! His will to live had gone. He would die as inevitably as a fly which abandons the struggle to escape and lies down in the glue that has trapped it.

The *el-moran* was smeared with red clay; his head was shaved except for four pigtails braided with strips of leather, in front, in back, and on either side of his head, the front one terminating in a triangular piece of iron fringed with small chains, which dangled in the center of his forehead; the calfskin about his shoulders had been worked with clay and grease into a dingy reddish-brown hue; the shield was of dusty-gray buffalo hide; and wherever the warrior's skin showed through the clay it had changed from its normal dull copper to the color of old wood ashes.

Settling into the hot reddish dust, immovable, his eyes dull and fixed, with the sun blazing down upon him, he looked exactly like a sketch in clay made by a hasty artist and now dessicating in the sunlight and crumbling into dust. He had removed the warrior's fringed mask from his face; and only the spear, stuck upright in the ground beside him, seemed to show any sign of life. The sunlight struck a flashing gleam from that tip which had "plunged into the hearts of twelve enemies."

Purgstall exploded with rage and fear.

If the *el-moran* would not attempt to move, then to —— with him! Here was the medicine; here was the cure. Take it, and the *safari* could continue on its way.

"Go," said the *el-moran* with both hands on his throat; "the *mzungu* has done this!"

Furious, Purgstall gave the order to the Wanyamwezi to move. He walked off in the lead himself, his heavy body stooped slightly forward, his face thrust out aggressively, his thumbs hitched in his belt. His thick khaki trousers were tucked into short, strong gaiters which surmounted heavy-soled shoes; his shirt was open almost to his belt, showing dry, yellowish-white skin; his double terai hat shaded his dull, smoldering eyes. One of the Wanyamwezi carried his rifle and bandoleers, but he himself carried a water-bottle slung over his shoulder; and a revolver and a broad-bladed eighteen-inch panga were attached to his belt. With the dust rising like white smoke above his knees and trailing behind him, he seemed to fit as perfectly in the landscape as the rhino drowsing under the mimosa.

After marching forward for at least a mile he turned his head suddenly and looked back. His sweeping glance located the dying *el-moran* by the spear that towered above him. The *el-moran* had fallen on his side, and the huddled heap looked in the distance not unlike Lewis' crumpled body.

Purgstall marched through the heat of the day. After cooking a stew of dried meat and meal carried from Oldeani, with a papaya to finish it off, he rested until the moon rose, then pushed on across the silvering plains again, this time carrying his rifle in case some sullen fool of a rhino floundered out of the darkness upon them, or a lion rushed unexpectedly.

The evening he reached Muanza his Wanyamwezi were exhausted. Leaving them in the outer fringes of the town, Purgstall boldly entered.

The first white man he encountered was a Greek by the name of Popoulos. This Greek knew him and recognized him instantly. His broad-brimmed hat almost flew off him in astonishment. With his hands held out in front of him, fluttering, protesting, while he looked nervously right and left and over his shoulder, he stammered:

"You! You! Purgstall! Some one will see you! Surely! Surely! You will be captured!"

"Captured?" said Purgstall, pushing his hat back on his head, thrusting his face forward and standing with his feet apart. "Who is going to capture me? You?"

"No, no, no, no!" chirruped the Greek in a great fright.

"Well?"

"Come through this gate here. Quick, behind the banana-trees. No one can see us!"

Purgstall advanced, looking sidewise at the Greek, with one great hand hooked in his belt above his revolver. Popoulos understood only too well.

"Who is going to capture me?" repeated Purgstall.

"Any one!" said the Greek in a hissing voice. "There are notices posted everywhere. They say you killed an English soldier and tried to rouse the Masai."

Purgstall grunted.

"If they catch you they will surely hang you," said the Greek, shifting from one foot to the other, rubbing his hands together, twisting his neck this way and that, peering into the darkness that was settling suddenly over the settlement, making the lake look like a sheet of asphalt that stretched away to the sky.

"Not me," said Purgstall. "Stand still!"

Popoulos froze, but his eyes continued to slip loosely in their sockets, and it was obvious that he was a man who had no other immediate desire in life than to run away very rapidly.

"What are they doing about it?" demanded Purgstall.

"There is a reward offered——"

"How much?"

"Fifteen hundred rupees for information——"

"Have you got a check-book in your pocket?"

"Y-yes."

"What bank?"

"The National at Nairobi."

"All right. Let me have it. Fountain pen? All right. Strike a match—here, behind your hat. For —— sake stop shaking!"

Purgstall wrote out a check in a round, labored hand.

"There," said he, handing it over to the Greek. "That ought to stop your palsy. You lose nothing by keeping your mouth shut. That check's made out to you for two thousand rupees, and I've dated it one month ago. If I'm caught within a week I'll say I bribed you. If I get away they can't question your right to the money. Now where do you think is the safest place to go? Bukoba?"

"No, no! The Belgians are there!"

"*Muungu!* That is so."

Purgstall gave a surly grunt.

"Well, never mind. I'll find a way. Be so good as to give me fifty rupees in silver and a couple of bottles of brandy, will you?"

"Assuredly!" said Popoulos with eagerness, and bolted into his house, reappearing a few minutes later with the money in a bag and four bottles tied by the necks with rope.

"I need a sweater, too," said Purgstall.

The sweater was promptly forthcoming, and Purgstall pulled it over his head, for with the coming of darkness the cool, sweet-scented breezes of the highlands began to blow.

"All right," said he, turning away. "*Kwa heri*, Popoulos!"

"*Kwa heri, bwana kubwa!*" said Popoulos faintly. "Good luck to you!"

"I always have good luck!" said Purgstall, turning savagely.

After a moment, during which the Greek's knees clung together, he added with grotesque solemness:

"When you hear of King Purgstall, Popoulos, come to me. I may need a treasurer."

The irony of the offer lay in the fact that Purgstall had no bank account with the National at Nairobi.

WHEN Purgstall returned to his resting porters, he found that two had deserted. This was serious, because it was certain that they would find friends either in the *dukars* of the bazaar or in the outlying *shambas*. In any event the news would spread rapidly that Purgstall was in the district, trying to escape; and with automobiles available to take up the chase along the main roads to Tabora, in German East Africa, already occupied by the British on the one hand, and Bukoba, occupied by the Belgians on the other, with the great lake immediately to the north of him, his chance of escape was slim.

Nevertheless he did not hesitate.

Repacking his loads and adding forty pounds to his own equipment, he suffered the loss of only one pack, which he heaved into a *donga.* He set out immediately on the trail to Tabora, keeping a constant lookout to the rear, from which direction an automobile might at any moment appear.

"Master!" said one of the Wanyamwezi plaintively. "Are we going to Tabora?"

"Shut up!" said Purgstall, looking back over his shoulder.

The fixed yellow lights of habitations and the moving lights of people and vehicles going to and fro were still visible. The murmur of the town reached his ears. He could hear the high, shrieking voice of a native singing in the bazaar. A haze saturated with the commingled smells of a human community, filled his nostrils with a maddeningly seductive temptation.

The desire to return and mingle carelessly and boisterously with his fellow beings was almost irresistible. He thought of sitting down on a chair with his legs under a good broad table covered with food in chinaware dishes—napkins—soup with bits of toast floating in it—hot coffee with cream—clean glasses, and bottles of whisky and wine, with soda-water at hand chilled by ice—boisterous laughter—shouted songs—servants darting back and forth!

Enraged at the thought of leaving all this behind, Purgstall flipped the nearest porter across the bare legs with his stick.

"Eh, *bwana!*" protested the porter reproachfully.

"Shut up! Move faster!" said Purgstall in a throaty whisper, and he struck the porter a stinging blow.

Both Wanyamwezi skipped forward and continued at almost a running pace, their black bodies nearly invisible in the heavy shadows that now hung around them. After a while Purgstall said sharply:

"Halt! Lie down in those bushes there. Hide! Hide absolutely! *Upesi! Pesi! Pesi!*"

The Wanyamwezi, dumfounded but quick to obey, tumbled into shelter, with Purgstall plunging after them.

Two orange-colored lights, like the enormously magnified eyes of a lion glowing in the darkness around a camp-fire, were swaying along the road toward them. The indescribable sounds of the night—a concatenation of myriad tiny voices shrilling, humming, shrieking, buzzing, whistling, rasping endlessly, in a swelling chorus so perfectly in harmony that the human ear became accustomed to it—were broken discordantly by the purr and rattle of an approaching car.

Purgstall lay in the grass with his rifle thrown forward, his eyes fastened sullenly upon the machine until it bumped away into the darkness of the curving road, the laughter of its soldier occupants adding fuel to his smoldering resentment.

When he stood out in the road once more, hesitating a moment, grumbling curses to himself, one of the Wanyamwezi whispered incredulously as the truth burst upon him:

"Ah, he is afraid! That white man is afraid!"

The other said—

"He fears the dead *mzungu!*"

"Ah!" said the other with an understanding nod.

Then after a moment's consideration he added decisively:

"No! That white man is running away from all the *wazungu!* He is a white *shenzi*—he is an untamed white man!"

"Ah!" said his companion, staring at the heavy, ill-defined figure of Purgstall with uneasy interest.

"Come," said Purgstall, lifting up his load. "We go!"

The porters sighed, lifted their loads to their heads and followed their master once more. The next time Purgstall turned around, however, he gave a roar of rage. Only one porter was in sight. The other had completely vanished.

"*Muungu!*" roared Purgstall, his voice reverberating in the dark like the cry of an animal.

Driving a bullet into the breech of his rifle, he ran back along the road, firing at shadows, cursing like a madman. It was amazing what fierce energy sent that huge body bounding across the broken country. All at once Purgstall stopped; the sudden flame of fury died down; he turned back to the first porter, who remained squatted by his load, trembling, too scared to move. Purgstall looked down at him and laughed.

"Idiot!" said he. "Why didn't you go, too?"

"Master!" said the scared man, rising to his feet, expecting to be struck down at any instant.

"Why didn't you run away? Do you want to remain with me? Am I the master you love?"

"Ah, great master!" said the porter, shivering.

All at once an idea struck Purgstall. He knew that in the next few days pursuit would be close. He also knew that capture would mean certain death. He could depend upon no man.

"Listen, Kazimoto," said he. "You are free to return to Oldeani. Here is a message. When you arrive the contents of the pack will be yours. If you do not reach camp you will be punished. You understand? You will be punished! Punished by me! If any *wazungu* see you before you reach Oldeani you will be certainly placed in the Labor Corps or put in a chain gang, and this load will be taken from you. You understand?"

"Yes, master," said the mystified porter, feeling that this must be happening in a dream.

"Good! Now give me your sandals; you can cut another pair in the morning. Also that small *sufuria!* Good! Now take the road straight for Tabora. Let no one see you. Tomorrow leave the road and return to Oldeani."

"*Ahsanti, bwana!* Thanks! Oh, thanks! *Ahsanti, sana! Ahsanti! Oh, ahsanti sana, bwana kubwa!*"

"Go!"

"*Ahsanti! Ahsanti!*"

"Go, idiot!"

The porter ran away in the dark toward Tabora, thinking nothing of the sixty-pound load that pressed upon his head, clutching desperately the piece of blank paper Purgstall had thrust into his hand. After a few minutes Purgstall commenced to run leisurely after him. Then he left the road and continued on as rapidly as possible for about an hour without overtaking the porter.

Satisfied, he turned about abruptly and headed straight back for Muanza. At intervals, however, he returned to the dust of the road and, facing about, walked short distances in the direction of Tabora. Even a good tracker following that trail in the morning would reach the conclusion that Purgstall had left Muanza in frightened flight, becoming more cautious in attempting to cover his trail as he and his porter grew weary. It would be logical to conclude that Purgstall was making a desperate break to reach the German lines, southeast of Tabora.

Instead Purgstall proceeded rapidly westward below the southern end of Victoria Nyanza, following the main trails as much as possible but being very careful to wear the sandals strapped to his heavy shoes where there was any possibility of his tracks drawing attention. The going was easy enough, the country being well-watered, fertile, with frequent villages and *shambas*. He was a man of divers tongues, and at the remote *shambas* he passed easily enough as a Belgian, though he carefully avoided contact with human beings.

There was no trouble at all about food, since the country produced good crops of corn and sweet potatoes and limitless quantities of bananas and papayas, which he appropriated as he required.

After passing Bukoba he expected to find the country sufficiently wild to feel thoroughly at ease once more. Instead, every main trail was marked by heavy traffic; and once he had to leap behind a rock to avoid discovery when an automobile bus loaded with passengers on their way to reach the Belgian railroad connecting with Elizabethville bowled serenely by.

Purgstall looked after it with an expression of disgust on his face, as if he had deep personal reason to resent this incongruity in central Africa.

He began then to swing in a northerly direction until he was well in the region bordering the eastern shores of Lake Kivu. He knew he was well up in the air, following a climbing trail through heavy, wet forest.

All at once he had a surprize. Ahead was blue sky, and he knew there was a clearing; but as he came to the edge of the forest he found himself upon the eastern verge of the great rift that splits Africa from top to bottom.

There lay Kivu below him!

THE mountains cascaded under him in tumbled brown and green velvet masses, and the lake itself stretched away like a blue velour carpet with the mountains of the western wall of the rift smudged very faintly against the sky. That was the Kongo country, and some of the brawling mountain streams he had crossed in the last few days, flowing eastward, must have been the ultimate sources of the Nile, running into Victoria Nyanza..

Purgstall packed his pipe and with his back against a boulder studied the country somberly. The lake was dotted with green islands; the valleys were shadowy with mists. He could see that the hills sprinkling the plain to the northwest were in places terraced. A flat mass that seemed to be in motion in the open was cattle.

Beyond was the cone of a mountain, from which a spiral of smoke was ascending. That and the numerous smaller cones that covered the plain like blistered paint looked somewhat like ant-hills; but they were a deep rich green on their slopes, and the valleys between seemed to be matted with papyrus.

"That," said Purgstall aloud, removing the pipe from his mouth and nodding his head in awe, "is a volcano!"

It held his attention, fascinated, for many minutes; for, though his camp in Oldeani had been in the crater of an extinct volcano, it had never occurred to him that those things sometimes blew up. As he studied the hills, however, he realized from the faint lines of terracing, the movements of cattle, the cross-hatched lines of banana groves and the feathery fringes of palms along the shores, that this country was undoubtedly thickly inhabited. Legends and the freely circulated rumors started by Germans that the Belgian Kongo troops were cannibals and that in remote spots unguarded and unauthorized persons were likely to find their way into the pot, filled him with a slight uneasiness.

"No," he said definitely; "I'll not go into the Kongo. But these people down here are Waruanda—some Wahutu, some Watusi; and the Watusi are the same stock as the Masai."

He thought that over for a while and decided it was too complicated a proposition to tackle single-handed. He had to face the fact that both the British and the Belgians had large armies in the field and would think little of detaching a battalion or two if necessary to quell a tribal disturbance.

"What I want," he said, "is to get in a place where they won't notice me for a couple of years. Then to —— with them!"

The beautiful country before him all at once became dark and threatening to his gaze. He no longer saw anything beautiful in it. It threatened him. Yet it held its fascination. If he had only entered there fifteen years ago! Now, he knew, he was within the territory of the Uganda Protectorate. He could not conquer that! Nevertheless, he was obliged to cross it.

Lifting his pack to his shoulders, he began to move directly northward, following trails along the edge of the escarpment that gradually brought him to lower levels among the scattering of extinct volcanoes. Here when he lost the trail he found the dark forests an impenetrable tangle. In many places the trees had been uprooted and flung about in the wildest confusion, with a new growth shooting up through them. The forests were hot, dank and sweltering; and the papyrus swamps, which he managed to cross below by bending the reeds transversely across each other, were even worse.

The air swarmed with flies and mosquitoes, and at every step he expected to flounder among crocodiles. Strangely enough he saw no crocodiles nor any signs of hippopotami; and the only buffalo he encountered, instead of charging him madly at short range, disappeared in the long growth at the edge of the forest.

At night Purgstall clambered up a tree. He did not sleep in comfort, for once he had seen a large serpent winding its way up a young banyan. But in this forest only the elephants seemed to be at home. It was as if the proportions had been measured to conform with creatures of elephantine size. What seemed an impenetrable and hopeless obstacle to Purgstall could be brushed aside by an elephant as a man wades through meadow-grass. Yet Purgstall could not get sight of the beasts that crashed about him. After three days without meat or any sight of smaller game except glimpses of the clouds of birds that called and cackled in the papyrus and which he could not reach with a rifle, he determined to shoot an elephant.

Two more days passed before he even saw one. Then, to his amazed and straining eyes, the black and gray shadows of the forest before him appeared to shiver. His pupils dilated in new perspective, and he found himself looking hard at the wrinkled side of an elephant, swaying above him, within reach of the muzzle of his gun.

Almost touching the monster, he fired two shots into it, knocking it down.

The elephant heaved itself to its feet and made off for a short distance, so that Purgstall thought he had lost it. Then it proceeded to tear up trees and thrash them about.

Purgstall very carefully put another shot into it that should have brought it down. Instead it gave a shrill squeal and charged. Another bullet went through its trunk, but it reached Purgstall before it fell, heaving him fifteen feet into a splintered tangle of branches, sprayed with blood.

It took the outlaw several minutes to find that he was not badly injured. As he released himself gingerly from his spiky perch he realized that the blood was the elephant's, and his pain was only from puncturing thorns. After that his next great fear was that his rifle had been lost or hopelessly damaged; but after a frenzied search in the gathering darkness he found it in good condition.

In his charge the elephant had cleared a space. Purgstall started a blaze, stretched his ground-sheet, opened his pack and proceeded to hack off one of the forefeet with his heavy *panga*. While he was busy at this occupation, all at once he felt the uneasy impression that something was stalking him. The forest seemed to be pressing in on him. Eyes were studying him.

Instinctively he whirled and leaped for his rifle; then stood with his back to the blaze, jerking his head this way and that, looking into the darkness. He could see nothing; and the forest, unlike the uproarious lowlands, was silent about him. After a while, still trusting his instinct, he squatted on his haunches, ready and watchful. An idea occurred to him; taking a branch covered with dry leaves, he thrust it in the fire until it caught, then stood up, swinging it high above his head.

Instantly he became the center of a ring of squatting savages, all looking at him with mild, patient eyes. Purgstall threw the branch back upon the fire and emitted a roar of laughter.

"Come forward, *mtusi!*" he shouted.

No one moved. Purgstall was a horrible-looking object. Stained with mud and blood from head to foot, with his strong beard standing away from his face like the masks of the *el-moran* and streaked with the orange-colored light of the flames; he was enough to make a savage hesitate. He hacked a piece of flesh from the elephant's leg and held it up.

"Come!" said he in Kiswahili, repeating the invitation in Masai.

The words were not understood, but the meaning of the gesture was obvious. Every savage understands pantomime perfectly; and a true pantomimist need never worry about the barriers of strange tongues in Africa.

The leader came forward, hesitating, with a curious mixture of boldness and reluctance upon his face. He was a surprizing little creature with short legs and long arms, a powerful frame and little tufts of hair upon his naked body. There was a furtive expression upon his face, but it was the furtiveness of an alert animal. He had no physical fear, though he was no taller than a twelve-year-old boy. Purgstall knew perfectly that if he laid a violent hand on this little gnome at least a dozen poisoned arrows would instantly quiver in him.

He held up the meat and presented it to the leader. Then he picked up the foot which he had cut for his own purposes, thumped himself on the chest, said: "Mine! Mine!" in a loud voice and placed it beside the fire. Stepping over to the elephant, he slapped the mighty frame with his hand, pointed with one hand to the savage before him and with the other made a sweeping gesture that embraced the whole forest.

"Yours!" said Purgstall.

The savage looked at him with large, unblinking eyes. Purgstall took him gently by the wrist and touching the hand to the elephant, lifted his own hand to his mouth and made a grimace as of one violently masticating, made the sweeping gesture, and repeated the invitation again.

This time he was understood. A murmuring and chattering like the clicking of monkeys sounded from the forest. The leader stooped down and cut off a piece of meat.

There was a rush from the darkness, and the elephant's carcass was submerged in a tumbling wave of brown humanity. Little knives slashed and hacked into the brown, quivering mountain.

The invisible paths and pig-runs of the forest became murmurous with the pattering of feet as the children of the wilderness came running to the feast. They tore into the bleeding carcass, burrowed into it, went staggering away, dragging streaming chunks. Nothing was overlooked—hide, flesh, serpent-like entrails, even the wiry hairs of the tail; bit by bit, strip by strip, all was flicked and hacked away by the flashing knives.

Men, women, children, their naked bodies smeared with blood from head to foot, crammed meat into their jaws until their bellies were distended and tight. Numerous fires were lighted, and over the flames the meat was scorched; more often it was ground reeking between shiny teeth.

Purgstall sat on his pack and roared with laughter. Tears welled in his eyes. He shouted, cursed delightedly, rocked and wheezed with laughter. He became hysterical. This was the first companionship he had known for six weeks, and the sheer horribleness of the spectacle appealed to his extraordinary sense of humor.

As he laughed he prepared his own food, burying the elephant's foot in red embers where it would cook into jelly and toasting some chips of the red meat with tiny pieces of fat *en brochette*, which he devoured with great relish, thinking nothing of the toughness as he ground it in his strong jaws, pausing every little while to emit bellows of jovial laughter.

At length he began to consider these people more sternly.

"Me!" he said, standing up and striking his chest with his clenched fists. "Do you understand? I am the lord! I am the *mwolo!*—the *kigeri!* I am the great hunter who kills the food!"

He looked like something unearthly, standing there beating his chest, a monstrous red-and-gray figure, towering above these scurrying, blood-stained gnomes. All at once a great idea struck him.

"*Muungu!*" he said, frowning. "That is so. No army in the world could conquer these people so long as the forests stand! They are formed by nature to crawl in pig-runs, to swing in trees. The forests belong to them—to them and the elephants! *Muungu!* I could make warriors out of these fellows!"

The little fellows showed no interest in parleying. They continued to gorge. At length Purgstall was overcome with weariness, weariness and reaction from the shock of his encounter with the elephant.

"Tomorrow," he thought, "when they have finished eating I'll hold a *shauri*."

Wrapping himself in his ground-sheet, with his head on his pack, he slept like the wearied *Rip Van Winkle*, overcome by the gluttonous orgy of his goblin friends. His awakening in the morning was also like *Rip Van Winkle*. He ached from head to foot; and as he sat up, stretched and looked about him, he saw nothing but the dark walls of the forest, dripping with the dampness of the night. Of the elephant nothing remained but white, scraped bones. Even the resilient undergrowth of the forest had sprung back into place.

Purgstall felt an uneasy thrill The disappearance was uncanny. Then he remembered the habits of these people, and he swore solemnly. He would not, however, relinquish the idea that had entered his head the night before, for he had also begun to consider the possibility of collecting ivory for eventual sale when he had established himself strongly enough to make his presence officially known.

"—— them!" said Purgstall, scowling at the stark bones that had been the framework of the most powerful of living machines twelve hours before. "If their bellies are their king I'll be prime minister!"

Two days later he managed to shoot another elephant.

The forest horde came out of nowhere and devoured it. Dawn found them still languidly chewing; but by full daylight they had completely vanished. Purgstall's sense of humor was again touched.

After two days he stalked a third elephant and shot it, determined to catch the chief and come to an understanding with him. He camped for hours by the waiting carcass, and in the end all who appeared were three wizened hags who had been trampled upon at the earlier feasts. The rest of the tribe had no immediate interest in him. They were completely fed up!

Purgstall gave a shout of rage and rushed at the little hags, who promptly dived into the pig-runs, squealing and kicking; and a moment later Purgstall found himself alone again in the silence of the forest. He didn't like it. This shunning of his company by the most primitive people on earth gave him a feeling of intense loneliness. The forest suddenly became unbearable.

HE DESCENDED to the plains bordering Albert Edward Nyanza, where the green forests gave place to dry scrubby vegetation—the familiar mimosas again, fan palms and dusty-looking euphorbia, and farther north the dom and borassus palms. These rolling plains were almost without population, and he made good going openly until he saw the white buttresses of Ruwenzori to the north and west and passed it behind him. He went around the north-eastern finger of the lake rather than cross it, for fear of running into British officials. But he was now deep in Uganda territory.

One day he walked into a village and made friends with the chief. He had his bag of rupees still untouched, and a heavy purse of English and Tabora gold sovereigns in reserve. The rupees were understood in Uganda, and he had no trouble purchasing what he wanted.

That night he slept in absolute comfort under shelter, having eaten a hearty meal of durra porridge, meat stewed with spices, and native beer. In the morning he cleaned himself in comfort, had his clothes washed and roughly repaired, and procured native tobacco.

In this state of new comfort he began to feel at peace with the world once more, and wandered about the village, talking and laughing. Returning to the chief's hut, he found himself face to face with a big bland Baganda, aping the costume of an Englishman, with an air of great dignity upon his black countenance.

"How do you do, sir?" said the Baganda in excellent English, while the chief standing behind him with a curious expression on his face, rubbed first one knee then the other with his feet.

Purgstall removed the pipe from his mouth, looked the curiosity over from head to foot, then lifted his chin and opened his mouth in a silent snort of amusement.

"Well, well!" said he. "What is this?"

"I am assistant tax inspector for this district, sir," said the Baganda indignantly. "Who are you?"

"Ruddy insolence!" muttered Purgstall, frowning and commencing to repack his pipe.

"It is my duty to know," said the Baganda firmly. "Have you got papers?"

"Get out of my way!" shouted Purgstall suddenly, lunging toward the big black.

The Baganda almost tumbled backward, and the chief gave two skips to one side. The villagers began to gather in increasing numbers. Purgstall walked calmly to his hut, but the rage that smoldered in him was beginning to seethe up again. Recovering his dignity, the Baganda official followed him, garrulously determined to gain his point if for no other reason than to impress the villagers.

"Sir, you have come from the south. How am I to know that you are not of German extraction? How am I to know that this is not a place of refuge for you? I beg your pardon, but in the interests of established order I must really and truly see your papers. Sir! You—you are *not* Victor Purgstall, fugitive from justice?"

Purgstall whirled about, his eyes distended and glistening.

"Yes, you —— nigger!" he said. "I am Purgstall!"

"Oo-ah!" said the Baganda, fascinated.

The white and the black stared at each other for a moment, Purgstall as if he contemplated choking the native, the Baganda as if he contemplated running. But the Baganda did not run. Instead he stammered in an increasingly loud voice:

"You—you are under arrest! You are under arrest!"

Purgstall entered the hut, hastily tightened his pack and slung it on his shoulder, and came out into the open once more, rifle in hand.

"See," he said to the Baganda, "you flabby-lipped ape! Am I a prisoner?"

"You are under arrest!" shouted the Baganda. "I am a duly authorized official. I tell you, you are under arrest."

He began to shout to the villagers, waving his arms.

"Shut up!" said Purgstall, walking away.

The Baganda ran after him and stood in front of him with extended arms.

"You cannot go," he said excitedly, "until the inspector interviews you."

Purgstall saw that the men of the village were emerging from their huts armed with spears and knobkerries.

"Get out of my way," he said.

"No!" said the Baganda firmly.

Purgstall threw his gun forward and fired.

The assistant tax inspector sat down very suddenly upon the hard ground, his back against the mud wall of a hut, his head tilted back, crushing his felt hat, his eyes wide, showing the white, his mouth agape, lips purplish, tongue grayish-pink. Over the right breast pocket of his light-gray coat was a dark-red stain.

"I said so!" he grunted in a deep bass voice. "That man is a killer! He must be hanged!"

With the rifle resting in the crook of his arm Purgstall walked clear of the village, looking backward and occasionally sending a shot to keep the villagers out of sight, until he was far enough away to make tracks. Fortunately for him the villagers were distracted. Officials connected in any way with the collecting of tax were never popular; besides none of the villagers had been wounded.

Purgstall managed to reach the shore of the lake in safety. He secured a neat dugout of the Baganda type, paying for it in rupees. Night crossed his trail, and he was safe from immediate pursuit; but he knew now that he was a marked man throughout the protectorate.

A sort of panic seized him. He felt for the first time that the brand of the outlaw was upon him. He had nowhere to turn. There was no hope for him but in flight.

Reaching the valley of the Nile without discovery, he pushed more rapidly northward until one day he came across the well-defined tracks of heavy automobiles. The trail was well-traveled, and it puzzled him. He had been going ahead with the intention of reaching Egypt, fatuously confident that he would find it a German possession!

But if the Germans or their allies were now in occupation what was the meaning of this remote road, traveled by automobiles? Did it mark a line of British retreat? Or were reenforcements being sent into Egypt overland from East Africa?

Purgstall camped by the roadside and watched.

A week's waiting brought him reward. Two heavy motor-lorries appeared, making their way confidently across the country, passed with purring motors, and rumbled confidently away to the northward. A few soldiers were riding in them carelessly, indifferently, smoking and laughing. The cargo consisted of mail-sacks!

Comprehension burst upon Purgstall like a thunderbolt. This was the British overland mail. For the first time he began to feel scared. What chance had he of ultimate escape? After all the hardships and dangers he had passed to the southward, he had found that the north was closed. With all Africa about him, he had no place of refuge where he might enjoy liberty.

"*Muungu!*" he muttered sullenly, miserably.

Eastward were the Somalis, westward was the cannibal country which he instinctively dreaded, northward were the Sudan and Egypt, and southward the lands that had driven him out. His mind had been so steadfastly fixed upon Egypt that he had thought of no other alternative.

All at once it seemed to him that he was bound to be caught eventually. He cursed in a sudden wild burst of rage. The whole business was such —— foolishness! Why did any one care about that little, snub-nosed, half-baked, bleary-eyed kid? He had brushed him aside as he might have broken the back of a snapping mongrel. No one had seen him even.

"Almighty!" said he bitterly. "Why do people bother so much about dying? Everybody dies! Every animal dies, too—violently. One eats the other. Why do they want me? Name of ——, they are killing hundreds of thousands down there in German East! Why bother about me?"

Seated on a rock, hunched, with his thumb in his mouth, chewing his nail, he looked the picture of misery. All at once a wave of relief swept over him. He rose to his feet, hitching his belt and looked slowly about him with an air of arrogance and contempt. He had just thought of Abyssinia!

ABYSSINIA was the only native State in Africa that still maintained its independence—absolute and inviolate. No European nation could make any impression upon it. Several had tried, and been badly smashed. Yet its people were of a very advanced type—and its political importance was so great that all the European powers kept legations at its capital, Addis-Abeba, posted on the beautiful hills at the sources of the Blue Nile.

Purgstall was actually upon the borders of Abyssinia, which lay to the northeast of him.

"*Muungu!*" he said. "That is no little tribal State, either. That is an empire!"

After crossing into Abyssinia above the northern tip of Lake Rudolf, he openly made friends with the Gallas—tall, slim, handsome people, chocolate-colored and clad in white togs. They were nomads, but they understood the value of Purgstall's gold. He bought horses and renewed his equipment from their primitive supplies.

For three weeks he advanced across deserts, mountains clothed with cedar and scoured with crystal torrents, and rolling highlands where the wild beans in blossom and the golden mustard looked like meadowland in Europe. It was an elevating, stimulating country, a wonderful country, and Purgstall traversed it with a sort of swaggering hope. He knew Africans! It might take years, but a country like this simply waited the hand of a strong leader—a Tippoo Tib or a Mahdi.

Purgstall had crossed the least disturbed area of the empire, but as he approached the capital he realized more and more strongly that the nation was even then embroiled in a relentless civil war. The reigning prince had been dethroned, and a woman was on the throne, a small, mild, religious woman, simple in her tastes and habits. Her adviser, the power behind the throne, was reputed to be a eunuch—a religious ascetic who had come out of the seclusion of his monastery to help guide the newly elevated monarch.

"What a setting!" said Purgstall delightedly. "An old woman and a eunuch!"

"Don't trust too much to that description," said his informer, a swarthy *shum* with wiry beard, clad in a cotton cloak and riding-breeches and a broad-brimmed felt hat, but with bare feet thrust into stirrups on a white mare of Arab lineage.

He spoke French, the polite language of Abyssinia, smoothly, almost suavely, much to Purgstall's amusement—since he was not accustomed to intellectual affectations among the blacks.

"Maukara, the eunuch, is an extraordinary man—not weak, not flabby and listless. No, no! Maukara looks like an old woman, no doubt—thin and dark—but he is more like—well, like the spitting cobra—tall, thin, black, swaying this way and that, with dull eyes—then he strikes! But he is a just man, and no one dares oppose him."

"I have killed spitting cobras," said Purgstall contemptuously, snapping his riding-whip. "Pah! I broke their backs—like that!"

"Look out," said the *shum*, frowning, "that Maukara does not break *your* neck!"

Purgstall shrugged.

He approached Addis-Abeba alone, having left his companions with all his impedimenta at the end of the railroad line which runs eastward to the gulf of Aden. Darkness began to fall, and his horse broke frequently from a trot into a canter.

Groups of other horsemen were riding northward rapidly. He passed small encampments with tents of cotton cloth in the fragrant, shadowy valleys, the smoke from camp-fires spiraling lazily up through the gathering mists.

He pushed on faster, hoping to reach the imperial rest-house in Addis-Abeba in time for dinner. He had heard of its courtyard banked with roses that filled the air with perfume, and he knew that good meals and good wine were served by the Italian proprietor. Besides, it was a meeting-place for German refugees, and he believed he would find congenial company there.

As he drew nearer to the low hills, covered with eucalyptus trees, upon which were located the scattered villages that comprise the town, the darkening lanes appeared to be strangely deserted. Only two horsemen were within sight, following rapidly in his tracks. He slowed down to a walk to give them an opportunity to overtake him, and as they came rapidly upon him he saw that one was an Englishman in light riding-clothes, and the other, obviously an escort, was a Bengal lancer, a big man with flowing beard and turban, carrying his lance in rest with a guidon fluttering near its tip.

Purgstall's first impulse was to give his mount the rein and bolt. Then he realized that he was perfectly safe. Great Britain or the representatives of Great Britain had absolutely no power to touch him. So secure was he, in this country of refuge, that he knew he could find within a few minutes' ride not only a Turkish legation but also an Austrian and a German legation with military guards and all the pomp and importance of first-class powers.

He might even be somewhat lionized by claiming to have killed and frustrated members of the British Intelligence and to have almost succeeded in arousing the Masai against the British. Turning in his saddle, he called out—

"Hello, there!"

"Hello!" said the Englishman, pulling down to a walk.

He was a slight fellow with a quick alert manner, a man accustomed to prompt and decisive action, cordial with a friend, dangerous with an enemy.

"You're riding pretty fast," said Purgstall, grinning.

"Right you are. You'd better get a move

on yourself. We've only got about three minutes to make the gate."

"What gate?"

"What gate! Where've you come from? Don't you know the order—no one enters or leaves the town after six?"

"No. I didn't know. I've just arrived here."

"Is that so?" said the Englishman with interest. "Well, until the battle is fought at Koromasch this chap, Maukara, is keeping the town very tight under his thumb. No nonsense about him at all. Quite right, too. We'd better be off. Did you come on the train from Dire-Daoua?"

"No," said Purgstall, trotting beside him. "I came from Uganda."

"Really! By Jove, what a trek!"

"I came further than that," said Purgstall insolently. "I came from German East Africa."

"Oh," said the Englishman sharply.

Then he gave a short laugh.

"Well, you chaps are putting up a splendid fight down there, I must say," he commented. "I'm sorry I can't hear your story. You've made a corking getaway. But you see— Well, the fact is, I'm attached to the British legation here; and it would look rather strange if the Abyssinians saw us confabbing. So that's that."

"I'm Purgstall!" said the outlaw arrogantly.

"Well, my name's Hickson," said the Englishman with a shade of annoyance. "You've made a wonderful trip. Good night."

He broke into a canter. Purgstall urged his horse to a canter alongside.

"I'm the man who shot Lewis," he said truculently. "I'm the man who started the Masai going!"

The Englishman drew his horse down to a walk once more.

"I'm afraid I don't grasp it," he said.

Then suddenly a light flashed in his mind. In the mass of reports and orders that had passed through his hands he remembered fugitive paragraphs relating to the matter. In particular there had been a memorandum suggesting the possibility that the man, Purgstall, might reach Somaliland and commence inciting the Somalis, who had been getting bolder along the British borders. This was a serious possibility, since the same Somalis had already made an alliance with the dethroned Prince of Abyssinia and there had been a couple of encounters between the Abyssinians and the Somalis that were touch-and-go.

But most vivid in his mind was an account of the affair received in a letter to him from an old Army friend serving with the Kashmiris in German East. Studying Purgstall from head to foot with an expression of loathing, the Englishman said—

"You —— scoundrel!"

"What! Don't you call names, you —— Englishman!"

"You —— scoundrel!" repeated Hickson. "You! A hulking beast like you! Murdering that poor, unarmed kid in cold blood as though he were a—a snake! By ——, if it were not necessary for me to hold tight here, I'd —— well take a shot at you myself!"

"*Muungu!*" said Purgstall hoarsely. "You think I won't shoot, hey?"

"Reach for your revolver and I'll beat you to it, you —— scoundrel! My ——, you put the shots in him while he was writhing on the ground—that poor, miserable, hungry kid—with your gang of Masai cutthroats watching—cutting his buttons and his badges off—leaving him to the hyenas and vultures! If you make a motion and I don't get you, Hira Singh will open you with his lance! Hira Singh!"

"*Sahib!*"

"Stand by! Keep your eye on this dacoit here! If he tries to shoot me, kill him!"

"*Sahib.*"

"Now, you murderer, ride straight ahead. I'll not trust you behind me."

Taken aback, Purgstall muttered—

"You'll shoot."

"No. Ride, I tell you!"

"I'll ride beside you."

"Right!"

Hickson deliberately slashed Purgstall's mount with his riding-crop, and the two horses leaped forward together, galloping neck and neck, sparks flying from the pebbles under hoof, with Hira Singh, his whiskers blown back against his shoulders, his body bent forward, with the gleaming lance-point in advance, drumming behind. Over gullies they leaped—flashed by ragged hedges, catching the smell of cattle and seeping smoke from hidden *tokhuls*—through long lanes lined with poplar-like eucalyptus trees.

Night fell softly about them. Hickson,

cursing the delay, put the spurs to his horse. Lather flecked him in the face from Purgstall's charging beast. At last they approached the eastern gate. Cries sounded. A warning shot challenged them.

"Pull up!" yelled Hickson, dragging his horse down to a trot and into a walk.

"—— with you!" roared Purgstall, infuriated by the enforced race.

And on he thundered. A moment later his horse's hoof struck a root, floundering forward, rapping with his hoofs in an effort to recover. Purgstall threw his tremendous weight back on the reins.

The horse sank on his haunches, plowing up dust and pebbles, just as four figures sprang from the shadows to seize the reins. Shaken, somewhat frightened and in a tremendous rage, Purgstall slashed at them with his whip.

"Let go, you —— niggers!" he shouted choking with fury.

Two of the men dropped their hold with sharp, indignant cries; the others held fast. Purgstall leaned forward and slashed at them again and again, almost speechless. One man cried out—

"It is a European!"

Another figure appeared by the roadside, slim, dark, wrapped in a black mantle and carrying a long stick. He was bareheaded and hardly visible in the darkness; but his voice, in careful French, was sharp, precise, almost mincing:

"What do you mean, advancing in that manner when you have been challenged? Dismount instantly!"

"By ——," gasped Purgstall, tossed by his plunging horse, "if you don't let go his head I'll shoot!"

"Dismount instantly or we will throw you!"

Purgstall managed to reach his revolver. One of the men struck him on the side of the head with a light stick. Purgstall fired blindly. The next instant he was dragged from his horse and thrown into a ditch. He struggled fiercely, striking, kicking. But he was overpowered—disarmed—his wrists roped tightly in front of him.

As his vision cleared he saw standing over him the tall, black figure of the leader of his attackers—slim, black, swaying this way and that, imperturbable, a shadow, less than a shadow—a spiritual force!

"Who is he?" said Maukara, the eunuch, who had been making the round of the guards in person.

"We do not know! He is a stranger!"

Hickson arrived, walking his horse cautiously.

"Who is that?" asked Maukara.

The challenge was called. Hickson replied promptly and politely.

"I am Maukara," said the eunuch. "Mr. Hickson, do you know this stranger?"

"He is a bad character," said Hickson with determination. "A fugitive who has been making trouble among the savages of central Africa."

"He appears to be a savage to me," said Maukara calmly. "What is his nationality?"

"None. He is an outlaw—a murderer—your Excellency."

"His bullet has killed Georgius, your Excellency," said one of the guard, panting.

"Throw a rope around his neck," said Maukara after a pause, "and hang him to that tree."

"Your Excellency—" cried Hickson, startled by the suddenness of the thing.

"I want no disturbers in this country," said Maukara. "The man is a savage. He has killed. Hang him to that tree."

A rope was thrown around his neck, and the loose end passed over the limb of a tree. Purgstall was not quite aware of what was going on. His mind was a little too slow to grasp the swiftness of the procedure.

"You, Hickson!" he shouted. "What are these —— going to do?"

Hickson could hardly find his voice.

The rope tightened around Purgstall's neck.

"Pass on, Mr. Hickson," said Maukara politely.

Hickson began to stammer. Hira Singh behind him shifted uneasily in his saddle. Purgstall gave a choking cry.

At that moment Hickson thought of the poor, forlorn figure of young Lewis with Purgstall standing over him, pumping bullets into him. He dug the spurs into his horse and bolted. A moment later he pulled up again, wrenching at the horse's head to ease his own jumping nerves. Jerking his head back over his shoulders, he caught a glimpse, against the rising moon, of a grotesque figure, seeming to bounce away from the bole of a eucalyptus tree, twisting, jerking——

Purgstall's object had been attained.

He was in a position to look down upon the greatest native empire in Africa—but he was in no position to appreciate it!

The CAMP-FIRE
A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

IT'S queer how some of you still think Camp-Fire is some kind of close corporation which they'd like to join, but to which they don't feel eligible. It isn't. All are welcome who come in the right spirit.

Is Private O. M. Leith, formerly of the French Foreign Legion, among us? If so, here's a comrade who read a magazine of his.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

I am sending you a clipping from the pages of the Toronto *Globe* of October 16th, relating to one of the old clipper ships like *Cutty Sark*.

I often have a feeling that I would like to be one of that bunch of good fellows, but when I realized what most of them have done and seen, I get cold feet. My adventures, if one can call them that, consist of just four years spent in England, France and Belgium with the Canadian army when I had a very varied existence, being attached at different times to the British, French and American armies. One good thing it did for me and that was it made me acquainted with *Adventure*. The first copy I ever read I found in Noyon in October, 1917 (I was attached to the Third French Army under General Mangin at the time), and on it was written "Pte. O. M. Leith, Lima, Ohio, U. S. A., French Foreign Legion."

Hoping that you will excuse the handwriting, which is the result of a souvenir from Heine in my right arm, I remain—WILLIAM D. LUCAS.

The *Cutty Sark*, once a tea clipper, the most-talked-of clipper of her time, has been bought by Capt. Dowman, a retired master mariner, and though she was built more than 50 years ago she is to have a dignified ending. She is to be restored to her old rig, moored in Falmouth harbor, and used as a training ship for boys.

"She is the last of the great sisterhood who were queens of the sea before the days of steam," says the Manchester *Guardian*. "Old men who went to sea as boys still tell with awe of occasions when the ships they sailed in tried a turn of speed with her. To have seen her in her prime is introduction enough in dockside taverns where tradition lingers.

"Legend, well authenticated, has it that once she sailed over 300 knots in 14 hours—a record that it would stir the stokers on the fastest steamship of modern times to better. Certain it is that on voyage after voyage in the 80's she figured as a record-breaker from Australia to England, and the tale is still told of how the honors lay with her in the great race in '72 with the fastest of her rivals, although she lost her rudder off the Cape of Good Hope and was delayed for six days.

"She was the one astonishing product of a now forgotten firm of Dumbarton builders. Great liners have since come from other yards of that Clyde town, but no second *Cutty Sark*. Already when she was launched in 1869 the doom of the sailing ship was written. In the same year the Suez Canal was opened, and the China tea trade, for which she was designed and in which she first made her name, began to shift its course as it already had its means of carriage. Yet for a quarter of a century she kept a place among her peers of sail—*Guinevere*, *Sir Lancelot*, *Thermopylae*, and the rest—on the long voyage round the Cape to the ends of the ocean. Thereafter she suffered the decline of her kind.

"THE late 90's found her trading leisurely to the Brazils or West Africa. Later still, like an old race-horse put to harness, she suffered the gruelling timber trade of the North Atlantic, under a Portuguese flag and name. But men who care for ships and know about them could still recognize her on the rare voyages when she slipped humbly up the Thames, her noble spread of canvas cut to the prosaic rig of a mere barkentine. If the fragrance of the tea chests no longer clung about her hold there were points enough, from her raised quarter-deck and low white-painted deck-house to the rake of her jibboom and her ancient figurehead, to mark her age and quality.

"A CORRESPONDENT who described in our columns the 'pale apparition' of the old ship as he found it last year wrote that 'even in her degradation she carries the unmistakable air, the poise of the seabird come to rest upon the waves. . . . Looking along her deck in the fading light of a winter afternoon one can imagine its dilapidation veiled, her slender spars once more clothed with a great press of canvas up to the skysail poles.'"

YES, these old-time weapons are interesting, but it is worth while to step carefully when it comes to using them:

Antelope, Montana.

I make bold to join the "Camp-Fire" and exchange remarks with the gang.

Was much interested in Mr. Bennion's letters about the old-style Colt, known as the cap and ball Colt. I myself have one, caliber .44, which I purchased from Fred Wainwright of Grayling, Mich. It is in excellent condition for so old a weapon, being patented in 1850.

The barrel is 8 inches long and the grips are of wood with a brass trigger-guard. It is a nice weapon and is in shooting condition.

I purchased some lead and caps at a local store, then sent to N. Y. and scraped up a mold from Bannerman, made several bullets, loaded the gun and tried it out on a tin can. As I pulled the trigger three of the six chambers exploded at once with a tremendous roar. I took heed from the experience and now load but every other chamber.

The barrel is deeply rifled and the weapon shoots surprizingly true, if loaded properly.—WM. H. FOSTER.

ONE of you brings up the question of Captain W. F. Drannan and his books "Thirty-One Years on the Plains" etc. Many of you will remember that this question was referred to Camp-Fire in general and that the general opinion was so decidedly against accepting these books as thoroughly reliable references on the early West that merely the general verdict was published and the letters filed instead of being printed in detail. Raymond W. Thorp, Charleston, S. C., raises the question this time and would be glad to hear from any of you who know the facts and care to write to him.

SOMETHING from Hugh Pendexter about his historical data on the bloody days in Kansas around which his serial beginning in this issue is written:

Much has been written about "bleeding" Kansas, the border ruffians, Jim Lane's activities, plus the enterprise shown by emigrant societies both north and south. To avoid historical matter that has been repeatedly given place in print, often from a partizan viewpoint, I have but touched upon the causes for the bloody disturbances in the territory.

WHAT I have given of the scenes in Leavenworth, Topeka, and Lecompton is taken from unbiased observers and is, I am confident, very close to the truth. St. Louis merchants in advertising lethal weapons for sale to all who contemplated a trip to Kansas took it for granted that no traveler would cross the border without being heavily armed, and the practise of making rifle, Bowie-knife, revolver and Kansas travel, synonymous was common. I have purposely avoided Lawrence and its stirring history. It has been written up so much as to become trite in a piece of fiction. The villainies in the yarn are largely confined to the "regulators", as cowardly and merciless a brand of bandits as ever infested any border.

THE fight between Bill Sherrard and Dr. Brooke at Lecompton took place much as I have described. Sherrard was of violent temper and Governor Geary's refusal to appoint him sheriff of Douglas County aroused him to an insane pitch of fury. He was killed at a public indignation meeting held in Lecompton after he was charged with having planned to shoot the governor.

Running-Antelope, a Hunkpapa chief, made eleven biographical drawings, giving the more important events in his life. Seven of these drawings are reproduced in the Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology and reveal the fact that Running-Antelope was rank poison to Arikaras.

In each drawing the chief is shown on the right, mounted, dealing death to the Arikaras. In each picture except one he is carrying a shield, bearing a large drawing of a bird of the *falconidae*, and said by Dr. W. J. Hoffman to designate his clan or band totem.

IN EVERY picture there is a small antelope drawn beneath the horse, running, thus identifying the rider, Running-Antelope. The first picture shows the chief killing two Arikaras, one with a lance and the other with a gun. This was in 1853. The second pictures show he shot and scalped an Arikara Indian. He pictures his victim as telling him he is unarmed, the right hand being thrown out with distended fingers in the gesture for negation, "having nothing"; but the fact that the Arikara was without weapons was nothing in Antelope's life. In 1856, according to the third drawing, he killed ten men and three squaws. Dr. Hoffman draws attention to the fact that the grouping of the thirteen figures of the victims strongly resembles the Egyptian method of drawing. The fourth picture deals with the same year, two Arikara chiefs, each having a hatchet stuck in his head, their rank being shown by the white weasel skins on their sleeves and coats.

THE arrow on the left thigh of Running-Antelope tells us he was wounded in that fight. In 1857, picture five, he struck an Arikara with a bow and then killed him. 1859 furnished the subject matter for the sixth drawing, when he shot and killed two Arikara hunters. One of them was in the act of shooting an arrow at the chief when shot. The last picture shows a gala day in 1863, when the chief killed five Arikaras in one day. This was quite a feat, as the dotted line shows the trail the chief followed until he came upon the Indians hiding in a clump of shrubbery. The five guns beside them show it was no easy task the chief undertook. In all these pictures the Arikara are identified by a topknot of hair, a fashion of hairdressing also prevalent among the Crows.

THE medicine-man who was *heyoka* is true to life, and in this connection I have endeavored to show something of the Siouan cults. While the gods of the Dakotas are a legion the principal ones are the Unktehi, or subterranean and subaquatic powers; the Wakinyan, or thunder-gods (James Owen Dorsey in his Study of Siouan Cults remarks that the beaver, as a servant of the Wakinyan, "seems out of place here—for judging from analogy he ought to be a servant of the Unktehi."); Takuskanskan, or Moving god; Tunkan, or stone god, etc., etc. It can not be said that the Indian worships these various "mysteries", or gods, but he is most careful in ritualistic observances. For sacrifices he uses what is of little value. The sun-dance, the sacred-feast and the taboo are but forms of self-sacrifice. The Thunder-beings and the water monsters are ever at war—fire and water—with each other. The Indian is drowned, or struck by a bolt, in this unending contest. Every thing has a spirit; any thing may at some time hurt or kill the red man. The tree may fall on him, a stick may trip him and cause him to fall, the lightning may strike him; and so on through an almost endless chain of possible injuries, or death. Sickness and death on every hand and a daily effort to placate some of the innumerable evil-working agencies.—Pendexter.

CURIOSITY on the whole is a good thing, but, speaking personally, curiosity and adventure mean nothing in my life when it comes to experimenting with opium. I experimented once with tobacco and I'd hate to know just how much harm it's done me. Oh, yes, I still smoke. That's why I'll do no experimenting with any of the other and more dangerous narcotics.

Seattle, Washington.

Answering a query in Camp-Fire: "Is it possible for a man to smoke opium and, by not inhaling it, keep from being doped and from getting the habit?"

YOU can not keep from getting the habit if you repeatedly smoke it, whether you knowingly inhale it or not, for you unavoidably do inhale a trace in the effort required to keep the "pill" burning until consumed, but the *habit* is not formed by a single indulgence nor are you doped on the first trial.

There is practically no sensation from smoking opium the first two or three or four times, and the inquisitive thrill-seeker is disappointed, but he should remember that neither has the cigarette a "kick" to the beginner. The opium habit is formed when the "kick" comes—when the fool at last feels the sensation, usually too late for any but the strongest willed. That is the great danger of experimenting with opium smoking—its subtlety. By its apparent ineffects, one is tempted to play with it.

Incidentally, opium is not smoked to induce sleep, but as a stimulant. A sufficient number of "pills" would not bring sleep but deathly stupor, often fatal. The "poppy dreams" idea came from the reclining position necessary in "hitting the pipe." The rosy (?) dreams come afterward with exhaustion. May none around the Camp-Fire experience those dreams.—E. J. Stull.

HAVE animals, insects and plants an intelligence fundamentally the same as ours?

Wilmette, Illinois.

Many years of observing the actions and reactions of animals and insects lead me to believe that all forms of life, even plants, are possessed of an intelligence fundamentally the same as that of human beings. The difference in their thought processes is one of the degree only, not of kind.

THIS question of animal intelligence I have discussed with many people, some of them very learned—where books are concerned. Most of my bookish friends, being afflicted with the "scourge of the professors" and wholly out of touch with reality, disagree with me right heartily and seem to feel that it would mar the glory (?) of the human intellect did they admit that other forms of life can and do think.

On the other hand I have found that men who spend much time in field and forest, wanderers from the out-of-the-way places, all agree with me, and most of them can cite numerous incidents observed by themselves that would tend to prove my contention. Such statements made by men who are keen observers are treasured by those of us who wish really to understand the world we live in.

I know that many wanderers from the far places gather round the Camp-Fire and I was thinking that perhaps you might put the question up to them for discussion. I have a whole host of questions I would like to ask such as are interested and would be glad to hear from them on the subject.—J. A. McCarty.

A WORD from Michael J. Phillips in connection with his article on a picturesque phase of early Western life in this issue:

Santa Barbara, California.

Here's my old friend John Waugh, stage-driver. He was hard to interview, but he knows stage-driving. And I had been interested in that great outdoor sport for a long time and knew some of the questions to ask him.

Next time you go to a movie of the West of 1850-'60, chances are pretty good you will see one of the many stages John drove. For Hollywood has been gathering 'em in the past year or two, and now has all but a very few of those which percolated along Southern California through —— and high water in the good, old, tough old days.

The only time old John warmed up and really smiled was when he was describing his encounters with the dandy little schoolteacher of his who turned road-agent.—Michael J. Phillips.

THIS old-timer comrade is in a position to give us real facts concerning Hank Vaughn. There is no better agency than our Camp-Fire for collecting the lost bits of the history of our West.

I beg to correct a statement from a reader.

I know all about Hank Vaughn. I was running the first daily newspaper in Walla Walla at the time your McCloud, California, writes about. It was myself who killed Hank Vaughn (in print), but he was not dead by a long shot, as I found out soon afterward. I had read in other papers that Hank had been killed in Prineville, Oregon, and this is the story:

HANK and two other men had been released from the penitentiary for "picking up a length of rope, to which a horse was attached." He then went to Prineville and, going into a saloon, called the crowd up to take a drink. One man, Charles Long, refused and Hank went to him to know the reason why, which evidently was not satisfactory, so Hank pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket and said "Take hold of this!" Long did and shooting commenced with both slightly wounded. The report got abroad that Hank had been killed and the papers published the report with the usual variations. He then made a tour to the Dalles and brought up at Walla Walla; I gathered other information for my *Daily Statesman*.

IT EVIDENTLY did not please Hank, for early one morning, as I entered my office through the composing-room, I found three men leaning over the table and Hank had written something which the foreman handed to me. It was about a jackass kicking a dead lion. I asked Hank if he were the jackass and he replied that the article had to be published within six days in my paper. I told him I was running the paper and such stuff would not be printed. Then action began, all three piling on top of me. I had nothing to shoot with, so had to take my medicine. I had the bunch arrested and they were fined $50 each and Hank was bound over to keep the peace. I held him three days just to show him I was not afraid of him, then asked the City Marshall to let him go, which he did.

Some weeks afterward Hank again came to town with a bunch of cowboys from the Umatilla Reservation country and rode over our sidewalk, which was against the regulations, and our Mayor, James McAuliff, held up his horse and made Hank dismount. Just then I saw our "brave" sheriff and city marshal going away and sneaking up a side street down an alley. I was so disgusted that I expressed myself in unmeasured terms and said:

"Hank, you may be the worst —— —— on the face of the earth, but if I wanted a man to go on a desperate expedition with me, I'd take Hank before I would a whole carload of sheriffs and city marshals."

NEXT morning I was writing my editorials when in came Hank. I said: "Well, Vaughn, what do you want?" He said: "Parker, you're the only —— man in this town that ain't afraid of me." I said, "Afraid? I was raised too near the woods to be scared by an owl." He sat down and told me he was going to give up all the rough stuff and attend to his ranch and family, so we shook hands and I gave him my opinion of himself and the crowd he ran with. He said he knew it was not right and he would give it up. I then told him that as long as he behaved himself, when he came to town I would give him a nice notice; then he placed a $20 gold piece on the table and told me to send the paper to him as long as it lasted. I refused it and told him I would send him the paper anyhow. We then took a drink and he called up everybody to join him.

A FEW weeks afterward I took my city editor to Parco, where the Northern Pacific was building a bridge across Snake River, to round up some subscribers to the *Daily Statesman*. Nothing doing. Leaving the town, we came across Hank. We shook hands and he inquired what we were doing over here. I told him and he asked what luck we had. Told him not a subscription and gave him the excuses everybody made. "No use for it!" "Didn't want it!" etc. Then we adjourned to the bar. Hank came to me and said: "You leave this man with me for a couple of days. I'll see if they don't want your paper."

I left my city reporter who returned in two days with $840 which Hank had persuaded all hands and the cook to pay.

HANK was not killed as one correspondent says, but died in his bed from a half-broken stallion he was riding during a 4th of July celebration at Pendleton, to show the people how they used to take the town in early days. I went to see him, but he was crushed to death. I told him to brace up, for he was too good a man to die through a horse falling on him. He saw he was gone and sent upstairs for an Indian pipe which belonged to Chief E-egan, the

Pinte chief who was killed in the Indian war of 1878. I have the pipe to this day, also a chunk of opal he also gave. He died as bravely as he lived; there was no fear in him and in different surroundings he would have been a credit to any community.—FRANK J. PARKER.

WITH fear and trembling I draw out from our cache a letter bearing on our pistols *vs.* revolver argument. It will surely bring in a deluge of other letters on the subject. Most of them will be interesting, too, but how could we publish all of them and it always sort of hurts to file away a letter that would have been good hearing at Camp-Fire. But there is a whole world full of subjects for us to hear about. How can we give all our space to any one of them?

But since the following is coming through to you, I might as well add another dating back a year or so:

Fort Riley, Kansas.

With reference to the automatic pistol *vs.* revolver controversy that was being held in the magazine a few weeks ago; I served for two years in a regiment armed with the Colt .45 revolver, and three years in one armed with the automatic pistol, cal. .45. My experience (somewhat limited) was this: that the automatic is just as accurate as the revolver, and can be fired much faster (even using double action on the revolver), can be loaded much quicker, and, if carried with a cartridge in the chamber, and locked, can be got into action as quickly as the revolver; but that it will occasionally jam. Not often; but if the one time when it jams happens to be when your enemy is shooting at you, it's once too often. During the recent War I never got close enough to a German to use my pistol, but at target-practise, when conditions are much better than they ever will be in battle, jams are frequent.—
—— ——, Captain of Cavalry.

THE second letter deals also with poisonous bites:

Harrisburg, Illinois.

Just finished reading "Camp-Fire" in the January 30th (1923) issue and feel like backing "Ole Man Wiggins" in writing.

I am wondering if Mr. Reese ever carried a .45 automatic through the sands of Texas and Mexico or in the MUD over there and never had the —— thing jam. A few years ago I would have agreed with him, but not now. Give me an Old S. A. .44 5½ inch barrel and I will be satisfied. If Mr. Reese doubts the ability of the old-timer to get into action fast with the old S. A., I respectfully refer him to Mr. Ad Toepperwein of San Antone, Texas.

The Mexicans use the following remedy for rattlesnake-bite: Make a poultice of sliced onion and kerosene and apply to bite; change poultice when onion turns black. If you don't die from fright, this will do the work. Have also heard that the onion poultice used on a Yellow Jack patient is successful.

Of the few cases of scorpion bite I can remember at the present time, none were fatal, but the victims were very sick for two or three days. All were adults, so can't say what the results would be on small children.—CIVIL ENGINEER.

DON'T forget that practically all of the original paintings for our covers are for sale to the highest bidders. Bidding on a cover closes one month after the magazine bearing it has appeared on the newsstands. No bid of less than ten dollars per painting considered. All canvases sent express collect. The magazine reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

A BIT of very quick work. Now our old friends the pirate crew would have needed considerably more time.

Balboa Heights, C. Z.

It occurred to me that the enclosed news item would interest the Camp-Fire readers. At Balboa we have a very fine large dry dock and shops capable of handling repairs to any ship afloat. During the War several German ships, which had been damaged by their crews while interned in Peruvian ports, were brought to Balboa and made ready for sea in record time, helping to "win the War."—R. S. CARTER.

Balboa Heights, C. Z.

The steam yacht *Casiana*, 254 feet in length by 33 feet beam, of 1,227 gross tons, Panama Canal measurement, was dry-docked at Balboa, cleaned and painted and released from dry dock in six hours on July 28th. Three hours were required for unwatering and flooding the dock and the time of actual work on the hull of the vessel was three hours. At the same time some repairs were made to the propeller, straightening the tips. After the hull was cleaned, two coats of paint were applied. Part of the work was performed after dark.

THE other day a physician comrade wrote us a long letter, asking Camp-Fire's help in a little matter on which he wanted testimony, expressing his liking for our magazine and, in a friendly way, calling attention to oversights and what he considered oversights on a number of points in the handling of the magazine. I answered his letter, of course, in an equally friendly spirit, but, having done so, I went further and frankly asked him for his reasons for not wanting his name signed to his letter or to his Camp-Fire request for help from the comrades thereof.

There has not been time for his reply, but I give here the questions I asked him. They are passed on to you because some of you have already voiced protest over Camp-Fire letters whose writers ask not to have their names used. As explained before, there are always a few cases in which such request is fully warranted, but we in the office agree with the protestors that there are too many people who want to talk to Camp-Fire or to ask for information or assistance yet are not willing to step out in front of all of us, stand on their own two feet and say their say.

THERE are, in any case, going to be fewer "unknowns" heard at Camp-Fire after this. There are, Heaven knows, plenty of letters from comrades willing to talk under their own names; our problem is to get space, not to get good material for filling it. Hereafter, the comrade who isn't willing to talk in his own name is in most cases going to have his letter shoved aside to make room for the comrades who don't believe in coming up to any friendly camp-fire wearing a mask and otherwise concealing their identity.

As set forth below, there is no reason for being too proud to meet Camp-Fire on an equal, open footing. Any one afflicted with that kind of pride is either under a sad misapprehension concerning the kinds of men who gather at our blaze or is just naturally the sort we'd rather not have come up to it.

Now I've sat dutifully on the gridiron and stayed all the way with you. It's only fair that you should take your turn. Am going to ask you what I have never before asked of one of our readers.

IN ASKING me to omit your name and address if we use your letter, "for obvious reasons," just what do you mean by obvious reasons? Is it your idea that your dignity and standing as a physician would suffer in consequence? Just why would they? Quite a few other physicians don't seem to take that view of it. Nor do many other men whose standing, on the face of things, should be as good as yours and, in some cases, better than either yours or mine.

Is your objection to name, address, etc., merely a general modest shrinking from appearing in print anywhere, or is it that *Adventure* seems too undignified a medium for presenting it to the public? If the latter, I've an idea you'll be rather amazed if you dropped into the office and got an understanding of the type of people who read *Adventure* by noting the kind of people our readers' correspondence comes from. For example, I take the letters lying immediately under yours in my correspondence basket now, not counting those from our writers or any others of the kind that any magazine's business brings to it in a general way.

1. Executive Secretary, Central Committee on Enforcing Public Opinion. Not primarily a reader but you are likely to learn soon through the public print that *Adventure* was primarily responsible for this Committee's action in a case that may rival the Dreyfus case in a way of a general stirring up.
2. Attorney-at Law, New York City.
3. An able-bodied seaman.
4. A man who speaks of having found *Adventure* in both officers' cabins and crews' quarters. A letter of an educated, cultured man.
5. A long typewritten letter from College Hill, Cinn. An extremely intelligent review of the Indian, his history, his problem.
6. A man on the staff of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*.
7. Captain in the Army.
8. Brief note from an educated man enclosing newspaper clipping of historical value.
9. A doctor of chiropractic.
10. Educated man writing under letterhead of National Film Corporation of America.
11. Educated letter showing considerable knowledge of natural history.
12. Educated letter from man on letterhead of lumber company bearing his own name.
13. Owner of a big Wyoming ranch. A reader whom I happened to meet personally and found a very charming gentleman. A Princeton graduate.
14. Uncle Frank Huston, whom you may know through Camp-Fire.
15. Man in charge of a big business near Vancouver, writing from a bay bearing his own name.
16. Attorney at law, Columbus, Ohio.
17. Letter from educated man.
18. Letter from educated man.
19. Letter from an M.D.

THE above is an absolutely fair report with no omissions other than those cited in the beginning. The letters were taken just as they lay before your letter was read. By "educated" or "intelligent" letter I mean a letter that bears on its face the mark of as much intelligence as either your letter or my own bears.

I might mention that the only regular M.D. included in the above list not only wants to communicate with Camp-Fire over full name and address, but has done so in the past.

Do you lower yourself by appearing openly in your own proper person before people of this type? There are often sound reasons why a man should speak at Camp-Fire without giving his name, but in your case I detect no "obvious" ones. That, of course, is a matter of opinion, and it is your difference of opinion that I want to hear.

IN CASE you feel that it is lowering to appear in *Adventure*, just what are your reasons for believing this? Is it the idea that stories printed on cheap paper can not be so good as stories printed on calendered paper? Or is it your dread of this idea possibly held by others? You find the stories not only good enough to read but good enough to be worth criticizing in minor detail. If they command your mental respect to that extent, when you are ashamed to appear in company with them are you indicting them or yourself?

I might ask you various other specific questions, but am trying only to indicate that I would greatly appreciate a frank and detailed reply.

I admit that in the magazine's early days the professional man might have had some cause to hesitate over having his name appear in our columns as a reader. Judging from our present type of readers, those days have past. In cases like your own, where they do not seem to have done so, I'm naturally particularly interested to learn the exact reasons. And, having replied so fully to your own gridding, I'm sure you are fair enough and sport enough to reply to mine fully and in friendly spirit.

I want to know, too, because on general principles I don't like the idea of a man's talking to Camp-Fire unless he's willing to stand up on his own two feet and do so. If they are good enough to talk to they are good enough to know who is doing the talking. As stated above,, there are exceptions. In a forthcoming number of Camp-Fire I have set forth the case in more detail.

SOMETHING about bad-men, a dog, some Indians and other matters from one of our Station Keepers. Somehow he makes a bad-man seem more real than when the latter is pictured at the safe-end of a smoking revolver.

San Francisco.

I find keeping an *Adventure* Station quite interesting from the character of the visitors who come. My place is pretty well out—that is from railway and ferry stations, but most of the wearers of the button who come to San Francisco give me a call, and they are pleasant, entertaining talkers. A boy who used to be one of my Boy Scout troop before the Great War picked up an *Adventure* while he was visiting Rio Janeiro as part of the crew of a tanker, and discovered my address—he had not heard from me since I was working for Uncle Sam—and promptly wrote me, while giving my address as his address for receiving his mail. Later he landed again in San Francisco, and made me a number of visits.

Thank you for the identification card. Hope it never has to be used, though the first year I was here after the War I was hit by an automobile while crossing the street and knocked about twelve feet. Stopped my taking my regular Sunday hike for over three months. I promptly took out accident insurance, and now the autos successfully dodge me, or I them. No chance to collect.

NEVER have had many adventures, though I put in numerous years as a newspaper man. Had hopes when the Great War came along and I was booked for France, but the Armistice Day caught me at Camp Merritt, and I was returned promptly to California. Ran a "Y" hut at Fort Barry until both my boys got home, the younger short his right leg since the Argonne, the older having gotten no further than Camp Meade. I wore uniform till October 15, 1919, and then went to work saving money to start in business again. And here I am. No more chance for adventure, now, I guess, since I am fifty-five, and disinclined to take the chances I would unhesitatingly have taken up to the time of my discharge. Could have gone to Siberia after the Armistice, but wanted to see my boys, and took the "Y" job instead. Since the return of my chums of the Army who *did* go to Siberia, and listening to their tales of dirt and disagreeable features, with little excitement attached, I don't know but I am glad I turned down the chance.

Noting some recent letters in the magazine reminds me that, in 1895, when I was city editor of the evening edition of the *International Times* at El Paso, Texas, I met old Judge Roy Bean—"the law west of the Pecos," who dropped into town and came around to "see the editor." I dug up a lot of clippings from the "morgue" of the *Morning Times* and ran a column about him, but was not much impressed. He was dressed when he called, in a long, black coat and a broad-brimmed hat, looked as if he had never shaved in his life, and had an awkward way of talking, like boys I have seen, who felt they were considerably in the public eye and did not know whether to be more pleased or embarrassed by the notoriety.

THAT reminds me, too, that the only two bad men I have met were a disappointment. One—his name escapes me now—I met in El Paso. He favored a cheap restaurant on El Paso Street with his patronage and got drunk as often as possible, sobering up in the back room of the same. A black bulldog he owned used to prevent all interference with his master during these drinking spells, and it was through this bulldog that I made the bad man's acquaintance. The dog was named "Devil" and was a fine specimen. I like dogs, and used to watch Devil keeping guard over his drunken master with considerable interest. Had some idea of making a story of the dog, but feared it might displease the gun-man.

One day, when I was in the restaurant alone, the bad man asleep in the other room, after a more than usually prolonged spree, the dog came out, looked around, fixed his eyes on me, wagged his stump of a tail sociably, and bumped against my leg like a cat. I suppose he was pretty hungry, or he would not have done so. I fed him a portion of my steak, which he took gratefully, and retired to the side of his master, the waiter expressing wonderment that the dog would have anything to do with a stranger. Later the dog would frequently come to me when I was in the restaurant, not always to be fed, but apparently out of pure loneliness, to be petted. One day, some time after, as I was going down El Paso Street I met the bad man and his canine companion. The dog promptly ran over to me and jumped up on me to be petted. The bad man seemed as much surprized as the waiter had been, and asked how I got acquainted with the dog. I told him the circumstances, and he merely said: "Poor Devil. I forgot him that time, sure." After that the man favored me with a nod and smile whenever I passed him.

Some time after I had gone north to work in Pueblo, on the *Chieftain*, I read one day that the bad man had met his finish in a gun-fight with a few El Paso police, and that they had to shoot the dog before they could take the corpse to the morgue. I was sorry—for the dog—but it gave me the material for a column story, and we used to get extra pay for that sort of thing.

THE other bad-man I met was Joe Dye, about the last of the Southern California bad men. I was visiting Ventura one time and, visiting the jail to see another man there, found Joe Dye confined there on one of numerous murder charges, which never seemed to stick. He was rather a pleasant man to meet, and was engaged while I was there in teaching a Basque, confined there for some misdemeanor, how to read and write English. Dye was afterward shot on Main Street in Los Angeles by a young man who had some grudge against him connected with a girl. He was rather proud of his exploit afterward, but it seems to me I should not have been, since he shot him from a second-story window, with a shot-gun when Dye was peaceably going along the street and was unarmed.

The bad-men were as disappointing from a spectacular point as some of the bad Indians. I saw Geronimo in captivity, and he insisted on having a dollar before he would allow me to take a photograph of him—the other red men asked two-bits or a dime, and some of the most gaudily dressed and befeathered specimens of the fort would pose smilingly for a few cigarets. I saw more imposing-looking Indians in the Memorial Day parade the year of the Panama Pacific Exposition, but, being in the parade myself, did not get any photographs.—A. H. Hutchinson, Station 149.

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow. Any member of Camp-Fire—and any one belongs to Camp-Fire who wishes to—may conduct a Camp-Fire Station and meet up with the men who are still hitting the trails of the world.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

Arizona—200—Clifton. C. Hooker.
209—Quartzite. Buck Conner, Box 4.

Arkansas—161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning, Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.

California—28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, Cottage Inn.
38—Los Angeles, Colonel Wm. Strover, Westlake Military School, Mount Washington.
60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Pinney, 100 Eddy Ave.
89—Chico. K. W. Mason, 1428 Park Ave.
108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.
113—Vallejo. Edith G. Engesser, Golden Triangle Rabbitry, Highway Homes.
114—Mill Valley. Louis F. Guedet, Restawhyle Knoll.
115—Los Gatos. G. H. Johnson.
116—Sebastopol. Mrs. Lucy E. Hicks, 420 S. Main St.
126—Covelo. Whit H. Ham. Box 388.
141—Santa Cruz. A. W. Wyatt, Capitola Road and Jose Ave.
149—San Francisco. A. H. Hutchinson, Veteran Press, 1264 Valencia St.
186—Santa Ysabel. William Strover, Santa Ysabel Inn.
210—Berkeley. Dr. Louis C. Mullikin, 305 Acheson Bldg.
211—Pomona. Fred G. Sunley, 480 E. Alverado St.
212—Del Monte. Alex H. Sokoloff, 3rd Signal Co. R. O. T. C.
231—San Francisco. Earl V. Swift, 24-A Brady St.

Colorado—105—Grand Junction. Bart Lynch, 236 Main St.
176—Denver. Elmer S. Burrows, 3407 Larimer St.

Connecticut—103—New Haven. Ralph Pierson, 3 Yale Station.
142—Meriden. Homer H. Brown, 1 Colony Place.

D. C.—167—Washington. Walter A. Sheil, 503 Sixth St, N.E.

Florida—87—Miami. A. C. Smith, 49 N. E. First St.
117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. South River Drive.
128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.
139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia
143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.
158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care *Call*.
188—Johnson. Clifford Martin.

Georgia—98—Hinesville. R. N. Martin, *The Liberty County Herald*.

Idaho—110—Pocatello. C. W. Craig, 223 S. Second Ave.

Indiana—18—Connersville. Norba Wm. Guerin, 112 East Eighteenth St.
90—Linton. Herschell Isom, 73 Tenth St., N. E.
180—Warsaw. Homer Lewis.

Illinois—47—Peoria. B. H. Coffeen.
66—Mt. Carmel. W. C. Carter, 1122 Chestnut St.
67—Plainfield. J. P. Glass, The Linshield Co.
189—Chicago. Herman A. Schell, 8708 Vincennes Ave.
213—Chicago. Pietro Ferraro, 1007 S. Peoria St.

Kansas—228—Leavenworth. Ben H. Lukenbill, 315 Shawnee St.

Kentucky—144—Corbin. Keith Mauney.
190—Louisville. H. S. Summers, 421 W. Jefferson St.

Louisiana—191—Melville. Wm. P. Stephens.
202—New Orleans. W. Bailey, 1116 Iberville St., Cor. Basin.
228—St. Rose. C. M. Elfer.

Maine—19—Bangor. Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St.
50—Augusta. Robie M. Liscomb, 73½ Bridge St.
111—Lewiston. Howard N. Lary, 714 Main Street.

Maryland—55—Baltimore. Henry W. L. Fricke, 1200 E. Madison St., at Asquith.
82—Baltimore. Joseph Patti, Jr., 4014 E. Lombard St.
151—Williamsport. L. J. Schaefer. Frederick St.

Michigan—69—Grand Rapids. Dr. A. B. Muir, 1133 Lincoln Ave., N. W.
79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 100½ N. Washington Ave.
106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.
131—North Muskegon. James Port Forsyth, Forsyth Publisher's Service, Phone 5891.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St.
192—Pickford. Dr. J. A. Cameron, The Grand Theater.
227—Adrian. S. N. Cook, 221 Clinton St.

Minnesota—112—St. Paul. St. Paul *Daily News*, 92 E. Fourth St.
145—Brainerd. F. T. Tracey, care Brainerd Gas & Electric Co.
181—Ortonville. T. Glenn Harrison. *The Ortonville Independent*.

Mississippi—88—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Box 244.
99—Picayune. D. E. Jonson.

Missouri—51—St. Louis. W. R. Hoyt, 7921 Van Buren St., phone Riverside 250.
94—St. Louis. C. Carter Lee, M. D., 3819 Olive St.
127—Salem. Emmet C. Higgins, 100 N. Tenth St.

Nebraska—95—Omaha. L. W. Stewart, 119 No. 16th St.
214—Tecumseh. Dr. C. F. Roh.

New Mexico—96—Silver City. Edward S. Jackson, Box 435.
203—Elephant Butte via Engle. Henry Stein.
229—Santa Fe. N. Howard Thorp, 103 Palace Ave.

New Jersey—17—Caldwell. Chas. A. Gerlard. Box 13.
164—Chatham. Roy S. Tinney.
91—Tenafly. Ed Stiles, P. O. Box 254.
146—Paterson. Charles S. Gall, 378 Dakota St.

New York—23—Jamestown. W. E. Jones, 906 Jefferson St.
34—New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.

107—New York City. Bronx Division, U. S. Junior Naval Reserves, 3132 Webster Ave.
147—Youngsville. Harry Malowitz, Youngsville House.
165—Saratoga. Wm. Marshall, Office No. 9, Chamber of Commerce Arcade.
171—Albany. 224 Greene St.
177—Brooklyn. George Iverson, 306 Macon St.
185—Brooklyn. J. M. Canavan, 69 Bond St.
193—Niagara Falls. Roy Tompkins, 1155 Garret Ave.
194—Hadley. Mrs Chas. H. Black.
204—Buffalo. Joseph T. Rozar, 198 Madison St.
205—Newburgh. Jacques Teller, 5 Golden St.
215—George's Sport Shop, 45 Main St., Yonkers.
226—Red Hook. P. W. E. Hart, The Silver Birch Shop, Albany Post Road, Duchess Co.

North Carolina—133—Pine Bluff. N. Steve Hutchings.
159—Waynesville. Harry M. Hall, 720 Walnut St.
92—Biltmore. C. Marshall Gravatt, Felstone Co.

North Dakota—160—Fargo. James E. Cowan, Central Garage, rear Grand Theater.
206—Fairmount. Frank Kitchener, Richland Hotel.

Ohio—58—Cleveland. J. F. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
52—Ulrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, 329 W. Fourth St.
63—Ulrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.
75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
113—Buena Vista. Geo. T. Watters.
166—Toledo. Frank P. Carey, 3267 Maplewood Ave., or wherever his Ford happens to be.
207—Columbus. Tod S. Raper, 77 Taylor Ave.

Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
225—Shawnee. A. M. Postlethwaite, 521 N. Beard St.

Oregon—4—Salem. D. Wiggins.
187—Portland. W. J. Belduke, 29½ N. Ninth St.
216—Portland. Miss Billie Russell, 532 E. 19th St.

Pennsylvania—20—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 252 S. Ninth St.
21—Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.
24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach. 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
78—Pittsburgh. Peter C. Szarmach, 350 Harmer St.
100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 926 N. 41st St.
121—Philadelphia. Don L. Brown, 3444 D St.
152—Harrisburg. Mrs. L. H. Wistrand, Washington Heights, Lemoyne.
182—Greensburg. Don Frederick Wermuth.
224—Oil City. J. M. Blair, 608 W. Front St.

South Dakota—179—Fairburn. Jesse K. Fell, *Custer County Press.*

South Carolina—217—Charleston. J. H. Keener, 346 King St.
97—Charleston. J. W. Mette, Navy Yard.

Tennessee—195—Knoxville. C. G. Pruden, 2024 Rose Ave.

Texas—33—Houston. J. M. Shamblin, 4805 Oakland St.
123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
135—Mexia. Charles O. Hurley, M. D.
148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
174—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West Eighth St.
183—South San Antonio. J. F. Nicodemus, Box 111, So. San Antonio Transfer.
218—Fort Worth. Robert Lentz, R No. 6 Box 73.
208—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West 8th St.

Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.

Vermont—56—Fort Ethan Allen. E. Worth Benson, Box 10.

Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, Custom House Building.
219—Richmond. Wm. Meek, 104 S. 1st St.

Washington—1—Ione. A. S. Albert, Albert's Billiard Hall.
61—Burlington. Judge B. N. Albertson, Fairhaven Ave.
83—Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book-Store, 1330 First Ave.
153—Monroe. Ed. L. Carson, *The Monitor.*
154—Mt. Vernon. Miss Beatrice Bell, Western Washington Auto Club.
155—Olympia. B. F. Hume, Commercial Club Rooms.
172—Sunnyside. Mark Austin.
196—Arlington. F. T. Herzinger.
220—Sultan. George W. Snyder, Main St., opp. Post Office.

West Virginia—48—Huntington. John Geiske, 1682 Sixth St.

Wisconsin—41—Madison. Frank Weston, 401 Gay Bldg.
5—Milwaukee. Paul A. Buerger, Apt. V, 1305 Cedar St.
138—Tomahawk Lake. Mrs. J. S. Hughson, Hughson's Resort.

Australia—39—Melbourne. William H. Turner, "Wolwoling" Keen St. Northcote; and Carters' and Drivers' Union, 46 William St.
76—Victoria. Chas. M. Healy, 30, The Avenue, Windsor Post, Dist. No. 8.
130—Brisbane. H. V. Shead, Sutton St., Kangaroo Pt.

Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Place de l'Entrepot 3.

Bermuda—230—St. George's. Fred C. Taylor, Wainright Cottage.

British Columbia—231—Stewart. Jack O'Shea, Ryan Bldg.

Canada—31—Howe Sound. C. Plowden, Plowden Bay.
84—White Rock, B. C. Charles L. Thompson.
22—Burlington, Ontario. T. M. Waumsly, Jocelyn Bookstore.
4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
29—Deseronto. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly.*
45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 84 La Riviere St.
30—Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, 143 Kennedy St.
62—Woodstock, Ontario. George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St.
85—Oshawa, Ontarió. J. Worral, 6½ King St. E.
102—Amherst. Lloyd E. MacPherson, 5 Belmont St.
124—Hartshorn, Alberta. Leonard Brown, 33-34-17 W4M.
178—Moncton. N. B. Chas. H. McCall, 178 St. George St.
221—Montreal East. M. M. Campbell, 95 Broadway.

Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mars, Smallwood Bldg.

Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.

China—222—Tientsin. Dr. George W. Twomey, 43 Rue de France.

Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominques, 7 Cerro.
175—Miranda, Oriente. Volney L. Held.

Egypt—173—Khartoum, Sudany. W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs.

Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu, Château Shanty.

Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
70—La Ceiba. Jos Buckly Taylor.

India—197—Calcutta. W. Leishman, 46 Wellesley St.

Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
136—Tampico, Tamps. Jack Hester, care of T. D. E. Humpo, Apartado 238.
223—Mazatlan, Sin. Paul L. Horn, Hotel de France, Apartado 102.

Navy—71—U. S. *Arizona.* Elmer E. McLean.
140—U. S. *Shawmut.* J. D. Montgomery.

Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.

Philippine Islands—198—Manila. W. W. Weston, De La Rama Bldg.

West Indies—199—Santo Domingo. A. W. Wells, Estate Consuelo, San Pedro de Marcoris, R. D.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the first and third issues of each month. Full list in first issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey and Asia Minor
27—29. Balkans. In Three Parts
30. Scandinavia
31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
32. Great Britian
33—35. South America. In Three Parts
36. Central America
37, 38. Mexico. In Two Parts
39—45. Canada. In Seven Parts
46. Alaska
47. Baffinland and Greenland
48—53. Western U. S. In Six Parts
54—57. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
58—63. Eastern U. S. In Six Parts
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
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Standing Information

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random:

Born in Spotsylvania County, Va., March 24th, 1890; but I'm not a F. F. V. so must explain. My people originally settled in Pennsylvania; but when the Revolutionary War came along, my great-great grandfather walked from Pennsylvania so that it would not be necessary for him to take up arms against England, and he walked and walked until he finally landed and settled in Essex, Canada. Perhaps he had conscientious objections against fighting against the flag under which he had always lived; perhaps he realized that only the successful revolutionist is considered a hero; or perhaps he just didn't want to fight. Anyway his determination is evident by the hike he took to keep out of it.

His grandson, my grandfather, moved over to Michigan, which was a pretty wild State at that time. He often told me of the wolverines, lynxes and panthers that he had shot at and missed. In the Civil War he redeemed the family name by joining the cavalry and fighting under Phil Sheridan; he also fought under Custer at one time, but the only thing he did during the war was to contract rheumatism, for which he drew a pension until death.

His cousin was U. S. Senator from New Hampshire, you know. The other thing, of which he was very proud, was the time he stole his rival's horse. He and a Confederate cavalryman were calling on the same young lady. The Confederate arrived first. My grandfather, arriving late, took in the situation through the window, took the other's horse and returned to camp. In war that is not considered horse-stealing; it is foraging.

After the war he moved to Virginia, and that is how I came to be born there and not be an F. F. V.

Virginia soon became too slow for me, so after some schooling in Washington I went to work in a bakery. I was on the reception committee that received the hot loaves as they issued from the oven and packed them on a rack for cooling. I received four dollars every week and all the cinnamon buns I could forage with the privilege of cleaning out the icing-tub.

Just about this time one of the men employed there tried to enlist in the Navy and was turned down on account of his age. This was the first I knew that there was such a place as that, and when he was so disappointed on being turned down I concluded that it must be *some* place. I also investigated and found out that I was too young, but that in the following Spring after I had had another birthday it would be all right.

Right then and there my life's work was decided on, and I began to study sailors and their habits. I followed them around town on my day off and tried to imitate their walk, which I did with great success; in fact I outrolled any sailor.

They were tattooed, so it was up to me to be the same. A professional was out of the question, so I bought a stick of India ink and some small needles, which I arranged in a row and secured with a split stick. My friend with the Navy ambition did the work. He would spit on my arm, rub the stick of ink on it and begin digging; and how he could dig! But what is a little pain when one's life ambition is being realized? Finally something was dug into my arm which after an explanation could be made out as my initials. I considered the first and last one sufficient.

With Spring came my enlistment in the Navy and the shattering of many of my ideals and illusions. Were you ever hit in the jaw by a petty officer while you were standing on a wet deck? You slip and slide and finally sprawl. You pick yourself up; and if it were against the law to think, you would spend the rest of your life behind bars.

I made the Electrical School and after completing the course with what I considered distinction I was rated 3rd class electrician. I immediately protested to the instructor, who notified me that when a man completed the course it was the rule to give him an electrician's rating and 3rd class was the lowest there was. This was the straw that broke the camel's instep, and my conceit languished and died right there.

The rest of my time in the Navy was all routine and "Aye-aye, sirs" until the "peaceful occupation" of Vera Cruz, when the *Prairie*, *Chester* and *San Francisco* bombarded the town. Besides my radio work I was a gun-pointer, although I had never qualified. Bullets were whizzing around, and I was doing my best to keep behind the gun and was very successful until a bullet hit the bulkhead and glanced in my direction, connecting with my leg. Right away I was certain I was killed and told every one about it, but the doctor soon fixed me up and I had to come back to my station. We had to sleep by the guns all night, and as there were several bodies of marines who had been shot in the first fighting, I lay down to sleep in such a manner that one of them would be between me and the shore.

For all this I received a medal with a mimeographed slip with Victor Blue's name stamped on it. Thousands of such medals and slips were issued.

After getting out of the Navy I shipped on one of the large Naval auxiliary colliers for a trip to Manila and return. The captain was a regular belly-robbing, Bible-reading down-Easter whose favorite sayings were: "I am supreme being on board this ship" and, "If I don't punish you God will punish me." I managed to stick until we reached 'Frisco, where I was confined to my room and later fired for "inciting the crew to dissatisfaction and riots."

I sailed the Pacific Ocean and Coast for four years in all kinds of ships and all kinds of jobs including second and third mate, quartermaster, radio operator, cabinman, messboy and waiter on the Admiral Line. June, 1919, found me master of a small schooner bound for "rich diggings on the Kolyma River"—or was it a branch of that river? I forget now. Every man in the crew was an owner, and the question often arose, whether I was working for them or they were working for me. Anyway, after two months—during which time we were on many sand-bars and collided with more icebergs, but with it all had a good time—we fetched up at North Cape, Siberia, 70 north and 179 east. We were able to reach that far only because of good luck and the fact that we never knew "it was impossible to reach North Cape in a sailing-vessel without power."

We lay around there about a month waiting for a gale to come and clear the ice away from the point; but I think if such a gale had come and it had been powerful enough to do what we hoped, we would have had no boat to proceed in.

After the ocean water began to freeze during the nights we concluded it was time to think of other places, so after landing some men who had been captivated with the beautiful landscape and the weather—there was a violent snowstorm the fifth of August—we proceeded down the coast, stopping at Cape Serdzekamen to get a magneto we had loaned to a trader. We got on another sand-bar; this was the only one we had missed on the trip up; but we got off again and sailed through the Bering Strait before a northwest gale and on September 8th we were wrecked "just like in the movies" on a desert island; nothing there except deserted Eskimo huts and many, many dogs. The wreck was all my fault; I was too close in and was caught aback.

While trying to pull off, one of the after bitts carried away and struck me in the chin. It knocked me unconscious and overboard, where I took in lots of cold salt water. Two days after, pneumonia set in, and I had the experience of being twenty-three days in a deserted Catholic chapel, suffering a great deal and getting delirious every night. Most of the men avoided me because they never knew what was wrong and were afraid it might be contagious. Some of the men took a skin boat they found there, rowed over to Nome, sixty miles away, and brought the cutter *Bear* to our assistance.

Since that voyage I have been on many ships in many different parts of the globe but nothing has happened. Next Spring I'm going back to 'Frisco and listen to all my friends say, "I told you so." You know, when I left I said I was an Easterner and there was where I was going to live.

I thoroughly enjoy my connection with *Adventure*. If your replies are a long time coming sometimes, make allowances because I may not be at home. Also remember that I don't profess to know it all about the subjects which I handle, but hope to help those who know less than I; but I do know from actual experience that the North has it all over the tropics for adventuring, and my only wish is to be accepted as one of you.—C. L. OLIVER.

London.

It has been suggested that I write a few notes relative to myself in the hope that the same will help in the development of a spirit of good fellowship between readers of *Adventure* and myself. It is with this hope that I write therefore, and I hope that what follows will lead to a closer understanding between readers who are interested in my country and myself.

I am an Englishman, born at Bolton in Lancashire, and as a boy was educated at Bolton Secondary School and afterward at Manchester Grammar School. From here I studied in Glasgow and then at St. Augustine's College in the ancient city of Canterbury in Kent.

Soon after this I started on my travels and have been in South Africa, Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, lived for over five years in China and have made a special study both of the country there and the people so that in November, 1922, *The Chinese Student*, the official organ of the Chinese students in Great Britain and Ireland, referred to me as "one of the leading authorities on China in this country." I appreciated their compliment.

And now I am back home. Lecturing and writing are my great occupations. Week in and week out I am traveling all over the country, lecturing to thousands of people in the course of a week. I think I hold a record for numbers addressed. During the Winter of 1922-3 I addressed over 300 large meetings and had over 800,000 present. I lecture in connection with the British Government and also on my travels abroad, and already I am busy booking for 1924-25.

I am a Fellow of the Royal Colonial Institute in London, a Fellow of the Institute of Lecturers, a Free Mason, member of the Constitutional Club, one of London's leading West End political clubs, a member of the Press Club, just off Fleet Street; Vice-President of the Canterbury (Kent) Conservative Club, an Old Mancunian to say nothing of quite a host of other interests.

I am in the closest touch with city and town officials all over England and regard myself as very suitably placed for the rendering of assistance either by letter or in person to readers of *Adventure* who are interested in my country.

I hope the above will help you to feel you know me better; I am at your service; get into touch with me; I shall never let you down. If you don't write, well then I can not help you.—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Hunting and Fishing in Australia

A SLADANG, referred to by Mr. Morton herewith, is a wild gaur, and a gaur is related to the gayal. In other words it's a kind of an East-Indian wild ox. All the above is out of the Standard Dictionary:

Question:—"Next year I have plans laid to make a trip to Australia. Could you give me a general idea of the customs such as an American would need to know in touring the country? Also would you inform me of the hunting conditions; that is, the kind of game and where it is best found?

I suppose you could also tell me the time of year it is best to tour the country.

As sports interest me greatly could you say a slight bit about them?"—JAMES LOGAN, Philadelphia, Penn.

Answer, by Mr. Morton:—In Australia you would find yourself at home if you are of a nature that fits in. Americans of good type are popular among us. Our customs and social usages are closely akin to your own. Our average cost of living is much lower than yours.

Hunting of sorts everywhere. Rabbits in millions—mere slaughter. Hares plentiful in many districts; good sport.

Kangaroos scattered and becoming rare. Wallabies—'roos of the smaller sort—still plentiful and to be depended on to give you a good run for your money. No noxious or ferocious fauna in the southern States.

The Tasmanian devil—a furious little beast with a disposition much as if a crabbed hyena had crossed with a scalded cat—is useless for sport. Plenty of brush-turkeys and smaller winged game back from the coast.

In Queensland and the Northern Territory sport is rougher and heavier. There are herds of buffalo in the north—bred from the original great sladangs imported long ago from the Malay Peninsula—that will give you real hunting in plenty if you go up there.

Turtle in millions, but they are so easy that the chase of them can not be called adventurous. If a man loses a thumb to a snapping turtle he has only to blame his own —— foolishness. Alligators keep things lively in the Queensland rivers and away over in that latitude. Noble sea-fishing everywhere away from the big centers of settlement.

Australia has a superb climate all the year round though in the north it is certainly hot.

Every form of sport conceivable, with some world-championships held locally. You needn't be anxious as to that. Baseball leaves the Australian cold, and lacrosse is only a tepid success; but you can play either, if you want to.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Mt. Moran, the Unscaled

BOTH peaks mentioned below are in Wyoming:

Question:—"It is my intention to attempt to climb either the Grand Teton or Mt. Moran. I have heard that the Grand Teton has been climbed twice and that there is no record of Mt. Moran ever having been climbed. Could you tell me if this information is correct? Also, is any other information available which might be of advantage in an attempt to climb either one of these two mountains?"—J. E. ROUSE, Casper, Wyo.

Answer, by Mr. Middleton:—There is no record, to my knowledge, of Mt. Moran having ever been scaled, and but two official records of the climbing of the Grand Teton. Michaud, French explorer, was the first white man to make the attempt. With a well-organized party and complete climbing-outfit he failed to make the ascent in 1843.

Capt. James Stevenson, member of U. S. Geological Survey, accompanied by N. P. Langford, under supervision of Dr. F. V. Hayden, were successful in the Summer of 1872. (See *Scribner's Monthly*, June, 1873.)

Thomas Cooper, now of Cheyenne, with Louis McKeene and Peter Pollock, made the attempt in 1877. Went to the head of Fox Creek. Crossed some five miles of snow from amphitheater near head of Fox Creek, climbed saddle, then around to north side of peak, and after an hour's steady climbing reached a shoulder on which is located a stone enclosure mentioned by Stevenson and Langford. Here they were barred from further progress by a perpendicular wall.

W. O. Owen made an attempt in 1891 and failed. He made another attempt in 1897. Failed. In 1898 he made a third attempt and was successful.

Mr. Owen gives the altitude as 13,800 feet; Stevenson and Langford as 13,762.

There may have been other successful attempts since then, but it is doubtful, and I can find no record of their having been made.

Sorry, but I know this data seems rather vague. I have had some experience at altitudes around 14,000 feet and have always found that the best time of the year to attempt the high places are the months of July and August, preferably July 15th to August 15th. Even then you will find snow-squalls and flurries quite common at altitudes above 10,000 feet. Therefore be certain to have suitable clothing and means of a fire at points above timber-line. I once spent a night in late August above timber-line without fire or blanket; and, believe me, I don't care to repeat the experience.

Good luck to you, and may you be successful if you make the attempt. I'll confess that I'd much rather sit in my Morris chair and read about it than to be with you. You'll sure find some hard sledding. If I can help any in the future, I shall be glad to do so at any time.

A two-cent stamp won't carry everywhere.

A Trading-Trip to Northeast Siberia

A SUMMER among "the finest natives in the world:"

Question:—"I propose to take a trip along the northern coast of Siberia, trading on the way. Now:

1. What kind of boat, size, etc., would be suitable?
2. How many men do I need as crew, and where could I find reliable ones?
3. As trading-goods I expect to take the following: Tobacco (pipe and chewing), pipes, sugar, flour, tea, beans, rice, canned fruits, 30-30 rifles and ammunition, knives (kitchen, hunting and pocket knives).

Can you suggest anything else that would be valuable up there? How would watches do?

4. Where should I buy the goods; in Seattle or Nome? I never was farther north than Vancouver.
5. What time should I start out? How long would the whole trip take, about?
6. How much will the whole equipment cost? Approximately, not including the trading-goods.
7. Where could I sell the furs, etc.?
8. Where can I get maps? And how is the water up there; stormy? Many reefs?
9. Are the villages scarce? Is there anywhere a customs station?
10. Is competition strong?
11. What is the average temperature during the months I'll be up there?"—W. BROWN, New York.

Answer, by Capt. Oliver:—Take them as they come.

1. A forty- to seventy-ton, shallow-draft boat. It must have power and should have sails to help out.
2. If you have never been there, the only thing to do is to get a pilot from Nome. They come high—about $12 per day—and must also be fed. Then you must pick up a native with a knowledge of English; give him some left-over trading-material after the season. That will be all you require on the coast while trading; but if you intend to go from Seattle or Vancouver of course that means an experienced crew for the trip to Nome.
3. Your list of trading-goods seems O. K., except cut out the beans, rice and canned fruit—canned fruit freezes—and add calico, awning material, a couple of grindstones, a cheap phonograph with Hawaiian records, some molasses, five- and ten-cent jewelry, some stick candy and a few toys for the kids. Be sure to take only first-class stuff because the natives appreciate quality and will pay accordingly. They are very fond of Star chewing-tobacco. Domino sugar in packages is the only kind of sugar they are acquainted with. As much of the stuff as possible must be in unbroken packages because they are afraid of second-hand material. One of

their customs is to bury everything that the deceased owned, so if you try to trade them anything used they immediately say—

"Dead man's gun; no good."

You could get rid of a couple of watches with gold-filled cases, also alarm clocks.

4, 5. What I would do would be to buy the stuff in Seattle, ship it to Nome on one of the first boats, then charter a boat in Nome for a couple of months and run along the coast, trading as you went, until you reached Cape Vankarem. Of course the trading is better the farther you are west of East Cape. There are many temporary settlements along the coast during the Summer; the inland natives come there to trade with the coast natives and the traders, and to fish. The last time I was there there were a couple of regular traders who lived there all the time and sold their furs to one of the Hibbard-Swensen boats out of Seattle. These men never attempt to trade in the Summer because in the Winter when the natives are pinched they can get much better bargains.

6. You couldn't charter a suitable boat for less than fifty dollars per day. This would include a capable master and everything required; but you would have to help, and if you handle it right the whole thing would not take more than thirty to forty-five days if you left Nome about July 25th and went direct to Kolyuchin Bay.

7. The furs may be sold in Nome or Seattle, or shipped to St. Louis, which is now reputed to be the fur center of the world.

8, 9. You can get navigation charts from any U. S. Hydrographic Office or from any store handling nautical supplies. The waters are shallow with many sand-bars; therefore nothing could be accomplished without a pilot; but it isn't stormy there in the Summer. There is no customs station.

10. I don't consider competition strong, although you will find others there. Let the native decide what he wants; don't try to trade him anything.

You will find these natives the finest in the world as far as honesty is concerned. They don't know the meaning of the word "steal." They are very hospitable and expect you to be the same. A cup of hot tea well sweetened and a couple of hard tacks (pilot bread) will do wonders to establish you in their good graces. They have a reputation of being lousy, but I never saw any signs, neither did any of my crew become infested.

11. The sun shines all day and night during the Summer, and the temperature inland gets rather high; but the water never rises above freezing-point on account of the presence of ice, and the temperature of the air, on the water, is about 36.

Mr. Brown, what I have written is the result of my experience in that country; but I haven't been there since 1919. Things have changed since then, and you must consider the information accordingly. I am going again next Summer, and before then I will find out the latest that I can from some of my old partners who are out by now and will soon write me from 'Frisco.

If you think you will make the trip and would like to write me later in anticipation of further information, let me hear from you some more.

In your last letter you overlooked the stamp. Please read the rules of "A.A." again.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

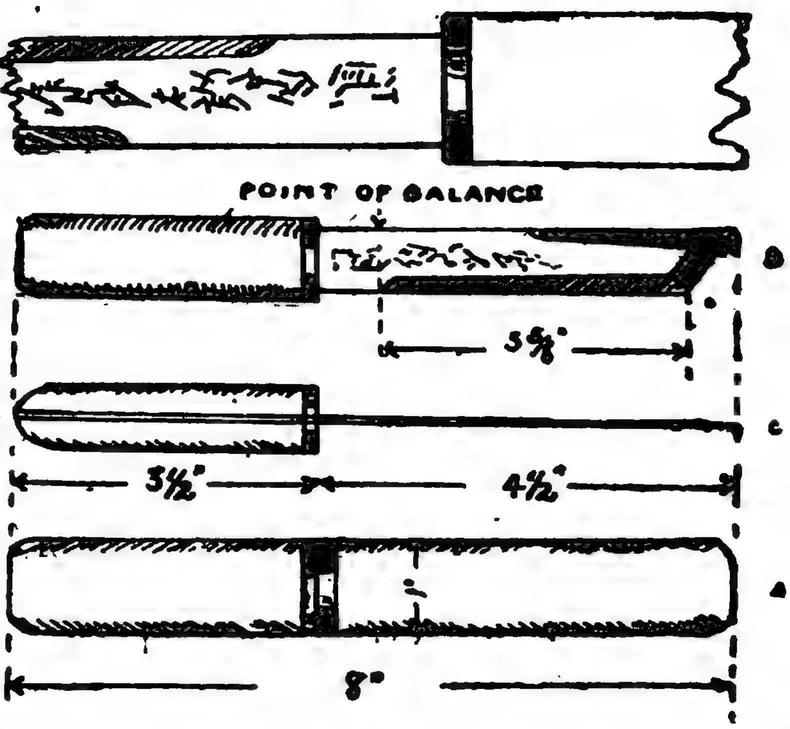
Japanese Edged Tools

YOU can shave with 'em:

Question:—"In taking advantage of the '*Ask Adventure*' service I enclose a sketch of a peculiar knife that was recently given me.

The knife, as it appears in sketch A with scabbard in place, is with the exception of the blade, carved from one piece of a peculiar light wood. The wood is singularly hard, and under a field microscope no pores are apparent. Neither does the scabbard show a seam, yet the task of hollowing it for that three and five-eighths by one-eighth blade appears impossible. Especially in view of the fact that it is possible to grasp the extreme ends of scabbard and grip and have absolutely no play.

The two bands represented at the junction of grip and scabbard are triple inlaid hardwood. All wood has been oil-rubbed, and there is no other odor apparent.



Two stories as to the use of this knife have been given me; the first, by its donor, that it is a Chinese sleeve knife. The peculiar manner in which the blade is edged is explained by the fact that it is intended to cut through the ribs without breaking. The second story, by a Japanese friend, is that it is an ordinary carpenter's tool, and the inscription is merely the maker's name. No excuse is offered for the scabbard, or the fact that I can shave the hair from my arm by merely drawing the blade over it. The microscope shows the inscription to have been made with a small wedge-shaped punch while the steel was hot, two or three lengths being used to make up one straight line.

Can you tell me what it is? Thank you."—Austin H. Phelps, Union Hill, N. J.

Answer, by Mrs. Knudson:—The story told by the donor of this knife certainly has the virtue of romance. I hate to destroy the glamour, but fear I must agree with your Japanese friend, since I have several carpenter's knives of this pattern. The Japanese carpenter uses a number of unique tools which look like sharp playthings to us. But these small implements are made of excellent steel, take a razor-like edge and execute some surprizing work. To match my knives I have a saw and a hatchet—

both miniature in size; but I have used the saw successfully on a two-inch plank. The hatchet-head is beautifully balanced.

All these tools are in scabbards such as you describe. The "edging" of the knife-blade end makes it usable as a chisel. Generally the scabbards are in two pieces, almost imperceptibly glued with some substance that *sticks*.

As for the excuse for the scabbard—merely to protect the keen edges, or to protect *from* them. The general fineness of the work on the scabbard possibly may be accounted for by that peculiarity in Japanese psychology which makes him enclose his finest hand-wrought silver or gold in a rough wooden box with coarse cotton lining. I have seen a marvelously tempered and etched steel sword-blade thrust into a rough block of hardwood for a handle; I've also seen a gardener's common pruning-knife in a hilt of carved ivory.

Going back to "romance"—this carpenter's knife may be copied in shape from some old so-called Chinese sleeve knife. That I can not tell, not being familiar with Chinese blades.

If you want an answer, read the rules.

Flivvering through Arizona

HOW to make a sleeping-bag out of a tarpaulin:

Question:—"Am writing for advice as to how to go to Arizona. Which road would you advise us to take? We have a Ford car.

What part would we go through to find work best? We are going for my health, and we have only about two hundred dollars.

What kind of a camping-outfit should we have?

I work as an auto mechanic but could do any other work."—ALDEN HEATH, Pawhuska, Okla.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Take the southern route. That brings you through Bisbee, Tombstone, Tucson and up to Phoenix. Look for work in every town you enter in Arizona. There are jobs scattered all along, and if you get to any definite place at the right moment you will get work.

Tucson and Phoenix are the biggest cities in the State and have a great many jobs. I would not pass up any town, as often a small one can produce a good job and any part of Arizona is healthful.

When I tour in a car I carry a bedroll, consisting of a heavy tarp 6 x 16 feet and hemmed at ends. Then a pad or thin mattress of cotton. A pair of Army blankets. A bunch of horse-blanket safety-pins. I spread my tarp and place my pad on it, leaving three feet of tarp sticking out. Then I arrange my blankets on the pad, bring long end of tarp up over the bed, tuck sides under and pin them down to bottom layer. It makes a sleeping-bag of the tarp then.

The three feet of bottom comes up over the head and is held off my head by bending it up in middle and fastening sides.

I carry a folding Army frying-pan, a pan for mixing dough, a folding reflector oven, one camp-kettle, coffee-pot, metal plate, cup and bowl. A knife, fork, spoons of two sizes. Bacon, flour, baking-powder, canned beans, sugar, coffee, salt, pepper, canned peaches, .22 rifle or small shotgun.

I have slept out in my bedroll where the tarp above my face froze stiff and had ice a quarter of an inch thick on it at sunrise. I was warm and perfectly comfortable.

Buy food as you go along and carry only enough to feed you two or three days. Otherwise it dries up and spoils for eating.

Read Rule 1 and the other rules.

The Simple Life in Austria

GOD made the mountains and man made the politics:

Question:—"I have long desired to spend some time in or near Vienna as a center and because of a supposed inherent charm attached to that section much akin to old England's. My parents came from Yorkshire and Somersetshire respectively, though I was born on Staten Island, now a borough of New York City. My boyhood conceptions of rural England from father's talks infected me with a latent desire to wish myself there and possess an estate for life, but circumstances willed otherwise. Next to such, the little I gathered of Austria-Hungary since the war has given a like wish to be there. I too have observed occasional news anent old properties in Germany and Austria bought up for a song but took such with a grain of salt or inferred a string attached.

You may recall that a syndicate bought up a big property or "loaned" on it for developing, belonging to a member of the royalty. It suggests the practical way of securing your objective since the bargains are gone. The California Cooperating Fruit Companies, the Russian cooperatives, the same in our granges, all testify to its being the solution of one's problems.

Why then should not a small group of us possessed with a desire to migrate to Austria pool our resources and with such for initiatory purposes have the balance underwritten and thus secure our objects? Obviously, one might say, you can do such here without going to Austria or Canada, etc. But here and other like places lack the interest and charm supposed to attach to Austria-Hungary and would so lack for centuries. Besides a renaissance is in evidence in Europe and in Austria-Hungary as anywhere. The law of periodicity shows that.

For the making of money only this country is as good and better than others as things go, but I don't think you or I believe life is *money-getting*. So in such as Austria might seem the finer side of life may be more cultivable than here for ourselves and children. The "dollar" can be made to go farther there than here despite monetary exchange artificially created.

I have a place here of one hundred and twenty-five acres, not a farm proposition, but in too small a way of itself for a self-supporting income, yet capable in time of becoming an estate and an income sufficient. About half is in pretty fair timber, mostly white pine and oak; and in the bluestone section quarries which I have worked years ago. Yet it is very much in the raw and rough—a gem in the making for charm and scenery in the foot-hills of the Catskills. I am here since August, repairing, etc., the house and barn *et al.*, the fields very much cluttered (uncultivated) with fine pines for landscape. This takes time and equipment but with uncertain neighbors shifting hereabouts one is not thinking the future can be assured of what is probably fixed in Austria; and at best one can not do in a year what required centuries as in Austria. That tells.

Say a large farm could be gotten in Austria and perhaps four to six families of our group were resident there, it might be a place with suitable dwellings can be located and taken over at a figure and on terms within our power to fulfil. To each might be assigned so much of the ownership pro rata. In New York apartments are now sold to tenants in joint ownership; so, anomalous as it seems, one may now own an horizontal slice in midair with a right to get down to *terra firma*.

The idea above need not mean an incorporation strictly. The liquidation of it might be of a quasi building-loan association practise. With a regular payment on a certain fixed price per share the same should mature in a period extending over the years, leaving each participant in individual ownership of his. This way should give a fixed character to one's neighbors and neighborhood. Cooperating thus, the business of each should secure like benefits, whether it be in small manufacture, stock, grain or fruit-raising or dairying as the section or circumstance warranted. It will probably take all of a thousand to move a small family there, and that is a considerable item of frozen capital."—C. L. C.

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—Austria today is hardly a self-supporting country. With the exception of a part of Upper and Lower Austria, the remaining territory is mountainous, and whatever people grow there is for their own support. You must remember that Vienna is still a city of over two million inhabitants, and that's just one-third of the total population of the entire republic.

Now supposing your project would be undertaken by some one. The fact remains that several thousand dollars would have to be expended upon transportation. That is "dead" capital.

There are, as I have repeatedly mentioned, no more bargains in farms and estates left. Those which are to be had cost anywhere from $2,000 up. They are, looking at buildings, farm implements, etc., from an American point of view, far below our standard. In order to bring your holdings halfway up to your idea you would have to spend more money. The comforts which one may find at most farms over here are absent. The mode of living of the former occupants is entirely different from your own.

After additional expenditures you are finally set. What then? You may be able to raise enough for your support. You have no market, because there is no surplus, unless you wish to go in for wholesale farming; and that costs more money.

To sum up: The expenditure is not worth the effort. True, the country is beautiful, the air is invigorating, the people congenial. But the old Austrian spirit is dead. Austria is a sad, disappointed country, now recovering from a severe shock. It is not a healthy place politically speaking for one who wishes to settle. It is in the path of political tornadoes which are continually sweeping over Europe, and Central Europe especially. Are you, by the way, familiar with the German tongue? These people speak a dialect, not High German.

I might say this, however:

For one who is content to invest his savings in a small farm and looks for nothing else but to raise enough to keep his body and soul together, and is content to pass the long Winter in front of a log fire with his books, attending to his soul; for one who is willing to pass his remaining years among simple peasant folk, minding his own business and his own wine; for one to whom Nature is an open book and who can hold communion with wind, water, mountain and clouds—for such a one there is many a place in Austria which God has blessed with some of the most beautiful spots of this earth.

That's one side of it.

The other one is this:

An American, transplanted into foreign territory, is vitally different from the foreigner coming to these shores. He comes from the promised land of these immigrants. Believe me, I have seen the world from one end to the other, and the U. S. A. is the best place for any man. I know. I ought to know.

I was homesick wherever I went. I did not overlook the fact that we have, in many things, a lot to learn from Europe, that their culture is older than ours, that their accomplishments in art are higher than ours, as well as theirs in lying, thieving and hypocritical politics. Our own politicians are schoolboys compared to theirs. Their ideals are not akin to ours. Their views on life, on that of their neighbors as well as their own, their ethical platform, their whole make-up is different from our own. Do you think a real American would feel at home in a hot-bed of political intrigue, of race hatred, of bigotry and hypocrisy? Not by a long shot.

Europe is a good place to look over, to study, to travel through and to disinfect, but the only place to live is these United States. I'd rather live in the lowliest hamlet in the last village over here than in a palace in Europe. I am saying this with the accent on the "under any circumstances"—I was born, raised, went to school abroad. Do I know? Do I know Europeans? Do I know their views on everything? Once upon a time they were my own.

From my store of knowledge and information and out of the very love for my fellow men I am laying before you the uncolored truth and the gist of my conviction. I feel confident that you will reconsider your ideas and agree with me that there is no place like home.

Neutrodyne *vs.* C. R. 12 Sets

EACH has its advantages:

Question:—"If you had your choice in buying a radio set which one would you choose from the following two sets and why: Grebe C.R. 12, or Neutrodyne (Hazeltine), manufactured by the Eagle Loop Co. in New Jersey, consisting of five bulbs?

Kindly do not print my name or address."—A. E.

Answer, by Mr. McNicol:—They both are good sets. If I had my choice I would select the five-bulb neutrodyne because I am familiar with the proper values employed and the adjustments. If I were buying a set for a friend and had these two sets to choose between I would buy the C.R. 12 if my friend knew little or nothing about radio adjustments; but if he was fairly well posted on circuits and principles of radio I might get him the neutrodyne outfit.

In congested radio territory such as the vicinity of New York the neutrodyne set has an advantage in making comparatively easy the elimination of undesired stations and of reradiation from neighboring radio receiving-systems.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

THE first two songs should have appeared in the preceding issue had I not talked altogether too much before getting down to business. Both belong to the *outlaw* group. The first is of American origin and is strongly reminiscent of "The Boston Burglar;" the second comes, I suspect, from an English broadside of the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. I should be glad to receive information as to their popularity or to have more complete texts.

Charles Guiteau

(*Sent in by Ruth Alexander Shannon.*)

My name is Charles Guiteau,
My name I'll never deny
To leave my aged parents
In sorrow for to die.
Little did they think I
While in my youthful bloom
I'd be taken to the scaffold
To meet my fatal doom.

My sister came to see me
To bid her last farewell;
She threw her arms around my neck
And the tears so bitterly fell.
Said she, "My darling brother,
This day you sure will die
For the murder of James A. Garfield
Upon the scaffold high."

'Twas down at the depot
I tried to make my escape;
The crowd they gathered around me—
I found it was too late.
The jury found me guilty,
The clerk he wrote it down;
On the thirtieth day of April
I was sentenced to be hung.

My name is Charles Guiteau,
My name I'll never deny
To leave my aged parents
In sorrow for to die.
Little did they think I
While in my youthful bloom
I'd be taken to the scaffold
To meet my fatal doom.

The Rambling Blade

(*Sung to me by Mr. Renfrow of Kingsburg, California*)

In London city, where I was born,
On Gordon's Field I died with scorn.
I served a term at the saddler's trade.
And was always called the Rambling Blade.

At about sixteen I married me a wife;
I loved her as dear as I loved my life:
To maintain her as a lady gay
I took to robbing both night and day.

I robbed Lord Mansfield, I do declare;
I left him standing on the Delaware Square:
I robbed him of his gold so bright
And carried it home to my heart's delight.

One day as me and my love strayed down on Gordon's Field,
On Gordon's Field we did pursue,
On Gordon's Field we did pursue,
And captured I was by the bellion (?) crew.

My father he cried, "Oh my darling son!"
My mother she said, "My heart's undone!"
And that pretty girl with the golden hair
Cried, "Where shall I flee?" to the wintry air.

Six pretty girls for to bear my room (?)
And six jolly boys to guard them home
Fair, boys, fair . . .

(*remainder missing*)

The third song, "The Roaming Gambler," belongs with the group which deals with wanderers and ne'er-do-wells but contains nothing to connect it definitely with the outlaw group. It is written in the style commonly found in American "songsters" of the 1860-70 period. The text as printed is probably but a fragment of the whole.

The Roaming Gambler

(*Sent in by Ruth Alexander Shannon.*)

I am a roaming gambler,
I go from town to town;
Whenever I meet with a deck of cards
So willingly I sit down—
So willingly I sit down,
So willingly I sit down,
Whenever I meet with a deck of cards
So willingly I sit down.

I came from Missouri
To spend two weeks or three;
I fell in love with a pretty little girl
And she in love with me—
And she in love with me,
And she in love with me,
I fell in love with a pretty little girl
And she in love with me.

She took me in her parlor,
She cooled me with her fan,
She whispered low in her mother's ear,
"I love the gambling man—
I love the gambling man
I love the gambling man."
She whispered low in her mother's ear
"I love the gambling man."

"Oh, daughter, dear daughter,
What makes you treat me so,
To leave your poor old mother
And with the gambler go?—
And with the gambler go,
And with the gambler go,
To leave your poor old mother
And with the gambler go?"

"Oh, mother, dear mother,
I love the gambler well;
The love I give to the gambling man
No human tongue can tell—
No human tongue can tell,
No human tongue can tell,
The love I give to the gambling man
No human tongue can tell."

MR. A. C. DE REMER, who has contributed much valuable material to the department, asks me to supply him with complete texts of two songs:

Two Israelite brothers in New York there dwelt,
In all kinds of merchandise freely they dealt.
. . . .

and

. . . .
With high-waving banners and slow-measured tread
As slowly we marched through the gates of the dead.

I've seen both of these somewhere, but at the present moment can not lay my hands on either. Can any one help me out?

SEND all contributions of old songs and all questions about them direct to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif. Do NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

APRIL 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

GREED ***J. D. Newsom***
He had dropped so low that the native stevedores shunned him.

WINGED JUDGMENT ***William Byron Mowery***
Poachers of the sea.

RIFLE RULE A Five-Part Story Part II ***Hugh Pendexter***
The mysterious cabin causes trouble.

THE BUMPING-OFF OF "BRUTE" KENTON ***Thomas Topham***
The "strong-arm" cop gets his.

ON ALLAH'S SEA ***Dale Collins***
Revolt on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

AT DEAD HORSE GULLY ***J. H. Greene***
Gold prospectors in the Australian thirst land.

BABY DEPTH BOMBS ***Charles Victor Fischer***
A U. S. N. scout cruiser, with the son of a nihilist aboard.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long stories* by Georges Surdez, H. C. Bailey, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Gordon MacCreagh, H. C. Wire, Leonard H. Nason and Frederick Moore; and short stories by John Webb, Conroy Kroder, Dale Collins, George E. Holt, F. St. Mars, Nevil Henshaw, J. D. Newsom, Thomas Topham, Bill Adams and others—stories of cowboys, vikings, Incas, soldiers, deep-sea divers, pioneers, Cajans, gobs, aviators, Moroccans, mariners, South Sea planters, Filipinos, doughboys, Australian prospectors, adventurers the world around.

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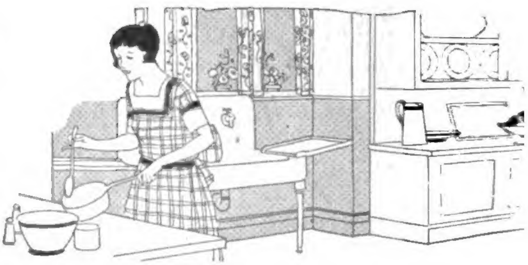

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